Results

In the Results section, summarize the data gathered from the study you conducted. In summarizing this information, it is important to remain unbiased and refrain from interpreting your results or drawing any conclusions from them.

Writing the Results Section

Although there are several ways to organize your Results section (including combining it with your Discussion section), the method described here consists of a synopsis section followed by one devoted to your results.

Synopsis

Begin by briefly restating your research questions and initial hypothesis. This will help your reader to recall the purpose of your study and understand how your results fit in with that purpose; it will also help you to stay on track and ensure that you discuss only results that are relevant to answering your research question.

Then, you will state your results, starting with the most important ones. Include small or insignificant data only if your hypothesis predicted large or significant data in that spot. Also include any data that contradicts your initial expectations – it seems counterintuitive to do so, but it is necessary to accurately answer your research question and guide you and future researchers in formulating new hypotheses.

Major Findings

Here, you will summarize the raw data you gathered from your research. This does not mean to copy and paste the data directly from your notes; rather, you will describe your results in plain English and refer to your raw data briefly as evidence. An excerpt from this section might look like this:

The data shows that students who got 8 hours of sleep reported feeling less tired during class than students who got only 6. Of the 12 students who got 8 hours of sleep, 11 reported feeling “not tired at all” while 1 reported feeling “slightly tired”; of the 12 students who got 6 hours of sleep, 7 reported feeling “somewhat tired”, 4 reported feeling “very tired”, and 1 reported feeling “slightly tired”.

Notice that the data is organized in past-tense narrative form. In addition, even though it could be inferred at this point that students with 8 hours of sleep perform better in school than students who get only 6, no conclusions about the data are drawn here. You cannot make claims about the relevant data until you have presented all of it to the reader: once you do, you are ready to move onto the Discussion section.

For quantitative studies, you may find it useful to employ visual aids such as graphs and charts to show your data. Keep in mind that aids are like quotes in that they cannot speak for themselves; you must explain their meaning.

Any additional data that is not immediately relevant to the hypothesis can be made available in a supplemental online archive.

A Few Key Points in Presenting Results

- Be clear and honest.
- Stay in the past tense.
- Be objective; do not draw any conclusions from your data until the Discussion section.