Discussion

In the Discussion section, you will interpret your results, which you will use to answer your research questions and discuss your original hypothesis is supported or contradicted.

Writing the Discussion Section

Begin your Discussion section with a clear statement of whether or not the results support your original hypothesis. From here, you may analyze your results in greater detail, explaining their implications for your research and for previously written literature.

Analysis

Starting here, discuss the implications of your results. It may be helpful to organize this section by addressing one research question at a time.

Research questions. In the plainest possible terms, answer each of your research questions. Then, referring to the data gathered from your results, explain your final answer to each research question and connect your answers to the initial hypothesis. Is the outcome of your study the same as you predicted at the beginning of the process? Is there perhaps any results that you found unexpected that lead to new answers or questions? Or, do you find the answer you arrived at surprising or contrary to your initial prediction?

Comparison with previous literature. This section acts as a callback to your Literature Review earlier in the paper. Compare your conclusions with those drawn by researchers on the same topic whose work has guided your own. This will help to contextualize your conclusion within the larger, ongoing academic discussion. Do your findings differ with the findings of others? What does this mean for the topic you have researched?

Hypothesis. Briefly tie together everything you have discussed regarding your individual research questions and say something overall about the hypothesis. If your hypothesis is correct, explain what this means in relation to published research in your field and practical applications? If your hypothesis is incorrect, discuss reasons why think that might be, based on the data you have gathered.

Limitations

To bolster your ethos as a researcher, you should take into account limitations, factors that may affect the outcome of your results. In considering limitations, you will first consider internal validity (the extent to which the results were directly caused by a successful implementation of your experiment) and external validity (whether or not the results from your sample size can be generalized to apply to larger populations).

Possible limitations include

- Sources of bias.
- Imprecise measures.
- Obstacles in implementation.
- Small sample sizes.
- Failure of participants to complete part or all of experiment.

Explain the effect that any limitations you find might have on your study’s internal or external validity. You need not dwell on your mistakes here or worry that you will invalidate all of your research. The purpose of this section is to be honest about any factors besides your own experiment that may have played a part in getting the results that you did. This information is helpful for any researchers who may try to replicate your experiment, so honesty is key here.
**Significance**

In this last section of the Discussion, persuasively convince the reader of the importance of your study. What are the theoretical, clinical, and/or practical applications of your findings? What problems still remain to be solved regarding the research topic? What direction should future researchers take in answering any lingering questions? Essentially, this section answers the *so what?* question of your research paper; why does your study matter? How does it fit into the ongoing discussion in your field? What can researchers, practitioners, and laypeople learn from it?