

Report Writing

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Structure of a research report

Title

Abstract

Introduction

Method



Participants

Design

Materials

Procedure

Results

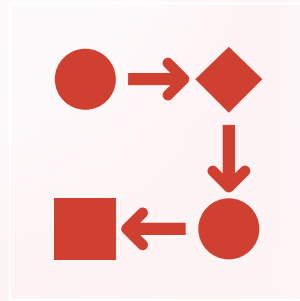
Discussion

References

Appendices

The Psychology and
Counselling House
Rules Document on
Moodle should be the
main thing you use to
structure research
reports

Title



Needs to be clear, short,
and informative



Should convey info about the
main aspects of the study

Abstract

A summary of the report – written by taking the important parts of each main section

Written LAST!

Approx. 120-150 words

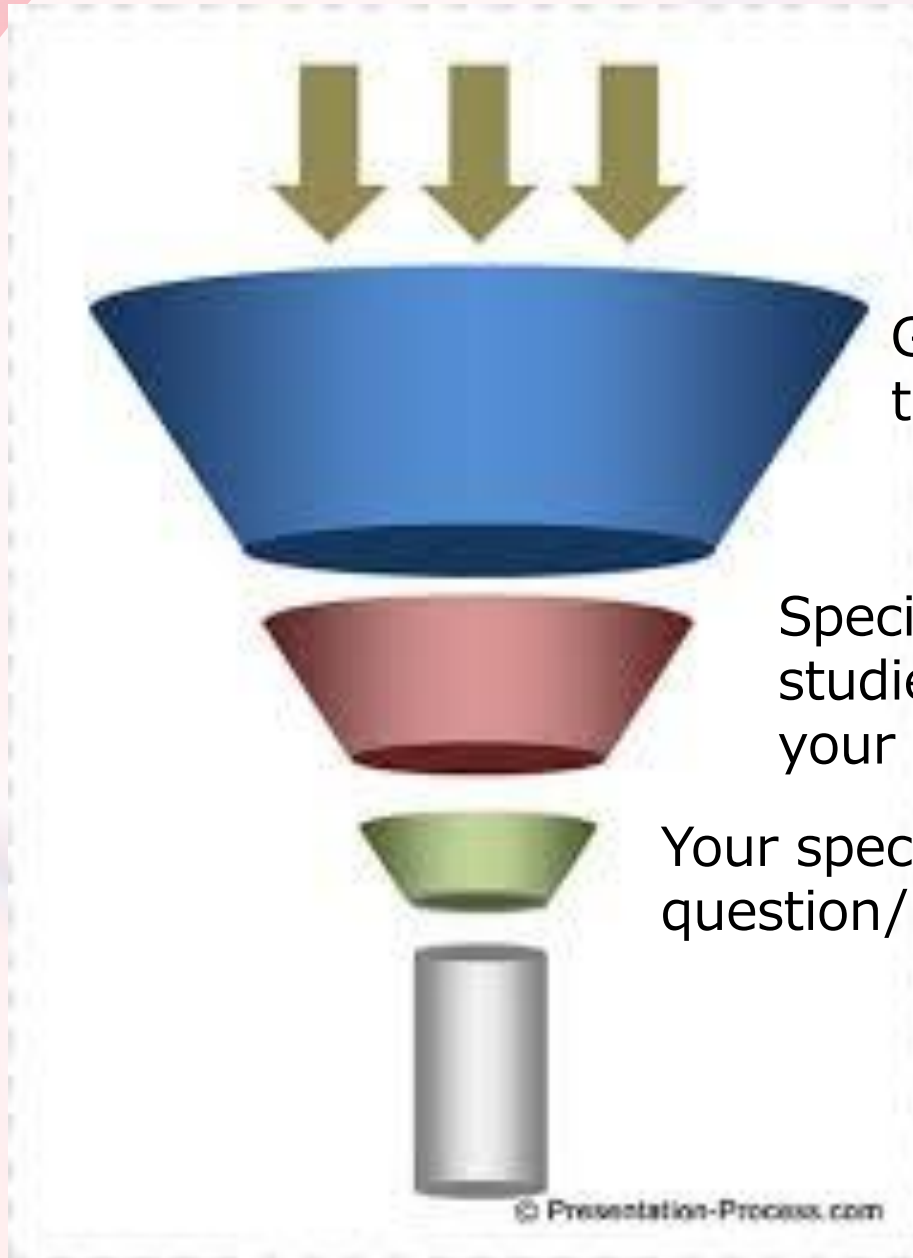
Single line spacing

What is the Introduction for?

- To provide a concise review of relevant literature from the area under study
- Sets the rationale for the study
- A good research question should be informed by psychological literature, models, and/or empirical literature

Introduction

- You should aim to make the reader understand why your research question is important and relevant
- Start broad, and then narrow down to focus on the literature most relevant to your research question



General introduction – broad themes/theories/evidence base

Specific themes/theories/empirical studies that are directly relevant to your specific question

Your specific research question/hypothesis

Method

Needs to provide sufficient methodological details about the study so that:

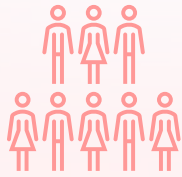
1. The appropriateness of the method you have use can be evaluated
2. The study can easily be replicated

Method

Write the method as soon as possible after the study has finished (so that you remember exactly what you / the participants did!)

Your method should contain enough information to allow for replication – someone else running the study again exactly in the same way as you did it

Sub-headings within Method



Participants



Design



Materials



Procedure



How to write a good method section

Method

Participants

Details of the participant sample

Information on participants includes:

- Number of participants
- Sampling method (random, opportunistic, etc.)
- Demographic information (age, gender, occupation, education level)
- Any other study-specific criteria (e.g., intelligence level, visual acuity, etc.)

The sample used for this study consisted of 66 (19 male, 47 female) undergraduate Psychology students from Swansea Metropolitan University who ranged in age from 18 years to 60 years ($M = 25.35$, $SD = 9.46$). Participants were recruited through the Psychology experiment management system (EMS) within the university and took part in this study in exchange for credits on the system to progress with their degree. Before signing up online for this experiment, participants read a short description of what would be required of them throughout the duration of the study. The description piece also included a caution stating that any individuals who believed that they could possibly have a problem with gambling should refrain from signing up to participate in this experiment.

Participants Example

Method Design

Concise information about:

- The type of study (independent, repeated, mixed, matched pairs, etc.)
- Variables measured and how they were measured (independent and dependent)
- Any other factors that were controlled for

A 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design was employed for this experiment. There were three between-subject independent variables, each of which had two levels. The first independent variable was sensation seeking tendencies; the two levels of this variable were 'low sensation seeker' or 'high sensation seeker'. For the independent variable of success of the bet, the two levels were 'win' or 'lose'. Participants were further categorised into groups for the third independent variable of age; 'emerging adult' for participants aged between 18 and 25, and 'adult' for those aged above 26. The dependent variable in the experiment was arousal.

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Design Example

Method

Materials

This should include **enough detail** to allow the reader to reproduce similar materials

Details of specific questionnaires, tasks, tools used, mechanism of data collection (online, lab-based) etc

The **Arnett Inventory Sensation Scale (AISS; Arnett, 1994)** was used to measure sensation seeking tendencies amongst participants (see appendix A). The paper based questionnaire consisted of **20 items** with two **10-item subscales**; Novelty and Intensity (see appendix B). The questionnaire **included statements such as** 'when I listen to music I like it to be loud', 'I don't like extremely hot and spicy foods', and 'I would never like to gamble with money, even if I could afford it'. Responses were given on a **four-point Likert scale** with participants having to choose how well each statement described them (A= describes me very well, B= describes me somewhat, C= does not describe me very well and D= does not describe me at all). **Items were scored between 1 and 4; A= 4, B=3, C=2 and D=1, with six reversed scoring items** in total (see appendix B). **Final scores obtained** from the questionnaire were between 20 and 80. For the purpose of this study, any individuals who scored between 20 and 50 were **categorised** as 'low sensation seekers' and those who scored between 51 and 80 were categorised as 'high sensation seekers'. **Internal reliability for the total scale was initiated to be .70 (Arnett, 1996).**

Materials Example (Questionnaire)

Method

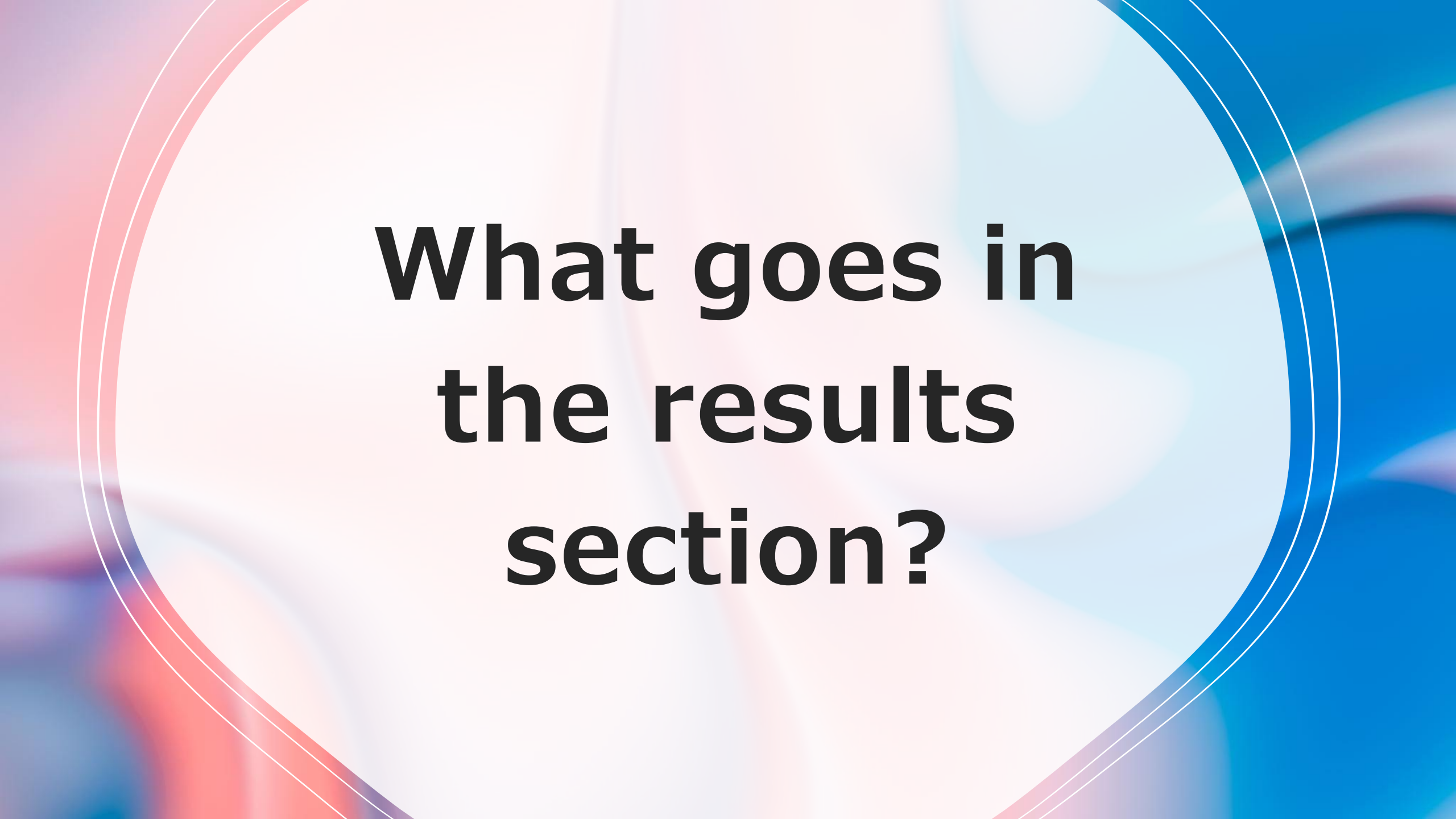
Procedure

- What happened to a participant during the study
- Consent and debriefing, how any other ethical issues were dealt with
- Standardised instructions
- Where the study took place / how it was delivered

Method

Procedure

- Think of writing a procedure in the same way as you would describe baking a cake – you need to describe **exactly what was done** in the study, how participants were instructed, and set it out in the order in which things were done
- The procedure should be logical, insightful and contain sufficient information for the reader to follow
- Step by step!



**What goes in
the results
section?**

Results (Quantitative study)

- Summarises data collected and reports the statistical analysis used
- *Descriptive statistics*
- *Inferential statistics*
- Must not include pages of raw data or statistical print outs!

Results (Quantitative study)

Descriptive statistics

- Report the means and standard deviations in **either** a table **or** a graph (not both)
- Do not infer support for your hypothesis based upon descriptive stats
- Tables and graphs must be clearly numbered and labelled (APA format)

Results (Quantitative study)

Descriptive statistics

- The data relating to **your** sample
 - N's. means, SD's, etc
 - Simple but clear presentation
- All participants completed both scales of the questionnaire. The mean score on the Positive Affect scale was 23.76 ($SD = 9.22$) and the mean score on the Negative Affect scale was 18.19 ($SD = 7.90$), out of a possible scale range of 10-40.

Results (Quantitative study)

Inferential statistics

Report what test was used, the value of the statistic, and significance level

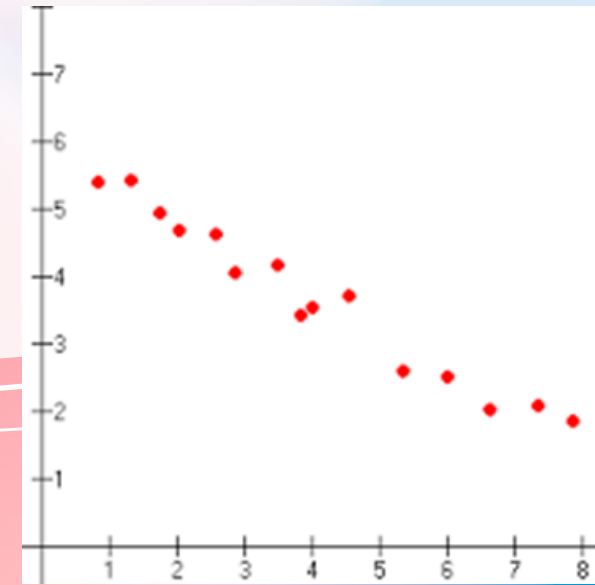
– *Each statistical test has its own format for reporting which should be adhered to (more information on reporting statistical tests will be provided during future lectures/seminars)*

Include a final statement regarding whether null hypothesis can be rejected / experimental hypothesis accepted

Results (Quantitative study)

The results of a Pearson product-moment correlation indicated that there was a strong negative correlation between the two variables ($r = -.76$, $n = 21$, $p < .05$) with high levels of positive affect associated with low levels of negative affect. The experimental hypothesis was, therefore, supported.

Figure 1
*Correlation between
Positive and Negative Affect*





**What
information
goes in the
discussion?**

Discussion

- Takes times to get right (and is often the weakest part of undergraduate research reports)
- Should be a critical analysis of the study as a whole
- Ensure you interpret findings in relation to the theory/research covered in your introduction, and also in relation to your hypothesis

Pointers for the Discussion

- Consider any shortcomings or limitations of the study and suggest realistic improvements
- Assess implications/applications of your findings to the field of study
- Make sensible suggestions for future work
- Draw the discussion to a close with a good conclusion

And don't forget...

- References – in APA style (7th ed)
- Appendices (*must be labelled in the order they are mentioned in your report from Appendix A*)
- SPSS outputs
- Copy of information sheet and consent form
- Copy of debrief form
- Copy of questionnaire(s)/other materials used

Successful Report Writing

- Start writing early!
- A naïve reader (who knows little about psychology) should understand your study
- The information provided should allow someone else to replicate your study
- Read!! Lots of journal articles
- Reflect and use feedback from other assessments to develop writing skills



Questions?