Title of Paper (up to 12 words)

Your Name, Including Middle Initial

School
Abstract

The second page of the paper contains a one-paragraph overall summary called the abstract. Though it comes first, it is best to write it last. In one or two sentences each, summarize the main points of each section. Indicate what questions were asked (Introduction), what the experimenters did (Method), what was found (Results), and what it means (Discussion). The APA Manual effectively explains what needs to be in the abstract (as well as all the other sections). Mention the theory, the hypothesis or hypotheses, the results, and what it all means. APA does not set a word limit, so find out what length your journal or your instructor wants (typically journals set the length to 150-250 words). Remember to not indent the first line of your abstract.
Your introduction should be organized as an inverted triangle. That is, you start with the
general and work to the specific. You might start with a short introduction to the general topic or
area, continue by describing previous research relevant to the topic, and conclude with a
description of the present experiment or study. A good idea is to have a final paragraph that
begins, “The present experiment was designed as ...” or “designed to address the following
questions...”

Your introduction tells the reader what question your study is asking. Present enough
background to make the question clear. Indicate, for example, whether you’re testing a theory
(whose theory, what does it say?) or trying to replicate a previous finding (what is that finding?),
or asking a question of your own (what question, what led you to ask it?). In other words: What
did you want to know when you began the study? What are you doing that is different from what
people have done in the past, and why is it important? You should try to do this in a logical
sequence so your reader understands how the present experiment fits in with what has been done
previously.

Other things to include are: independent and dependent variables (if an experiment was
conducted), the design of the study, and your hypothesis (or hypotheses, if you have more than
one). Define concepts the reader needs to know in order to understand your terminology in the
paper. Relate your hypothesis to your theory, explaining especially the operationalization of the
variables (i.e., how specifically you are measuring the variables of interest, though you will
provide these details in the Method section). A short summary of your method will make things
easier for the reader to understand your hypotheses. Basically, you are telling your reader what
she or he needs to know in order to understand what you are doing, why you are doing it, and
what you hope to accomplish.

Method

Assume that the reader may want to repeat your study exactly (attempt to replicate the
findings). Provide enough information so that someone could do that if he or she wished. The
question to ask yourself is: “If I were to read this Method section, knowing nothing else about the study, could I go out and do the study for myself exactly as it was done?” If the answer is no, you need to add more detail.

Your choice of detail must be well thought out. For instance, don’t include trivial events that happened during the experiment (e.g., “one person fainted”, “the power went out”); those anomalies, if important, will go in the Discussion section (below). Also, it is not necessary to tell every detail of each item and thing (e.g., “The chairs were green but the experimenter was sitting on a blue one.”). There are some details that do not matter in a replication and should be left out. Also, specifics as to how to turn on the computer, that participants “double-clicked” on an icon, and other items like that can be left out. A good guideline is to put yourself in the shoes of a participant: What did the participant experience, or see, or feel? Be sure to explain the procedure chronologically.

It is necessary to use sub-sections. Different kinds of psychologists (and other scientists) use different sub-sections sometimes, but almost all of them use Participants and Procedure sections.

**Participants**

Describe the number of participants, where they came from (e.g., volunteers, college students), and other relevant information about them (age, sex, ethnicity, year in school, and so on).

**Procedure**

Start by explaining the design of the research (e.g., 2x2 between-participants design, correlational study). Then, using past tense, report the steps in the order in which they were done. Finally, explain any debriefing. Provide sample items from your questionnaire(s). If you’re using materials other than a questionnaire (e.g., a puzzle, an advertisement), then you may want a subsection labeled for those. Describe any equipment (e.g., computers, slide projector, etc.), questionnaires, reading materials, puzzles, etc.
Results

This section tells the reader what you found, that is, the relationships between variables. Explain what data were collected (e.g., reaction times, attitudes, total words recalled), any calculations or transformations of the data, and any inferential statistics you used (e.g., t test, ANOVA). This section can either be at the end of the Methods section (like this) or the first paragraph of the Results section (with no heading). The data are presented to support your description of the relationship, and any tests are described. Assume that your reader knows what a significance test is; you need not explain its logic. Very rarely are all of the data (every single number obtained during the study) presented; instead, means, standard deviations, and other summary descriptive statistics are reported. Also, much of this is summarized in Tables or Figures that are referenced in the text but that appear at the end of the report. You can order your Results section by a subsection for each hypothesis or each dependent variable. After reporting the results and their significance level, give an English translation of what the results mean (e.g., “An analysis of variance revealed that the main effect of age was statistically significant, $F(1, 58) = 26.73, p < .006$. Thus, older people are more disorganized ($M = 3.50$) than younger people ($M = 2.00$”).

The important thing is to be clear and efficient. A Results section is not just a mass of numbers. You may present descriptive statistics, figures, or tables to summarize the data, or all three. Tables and Figures go on separate pages at the end of the manuscript. Be sure that you refer to each Table and Figure in the text! For example: “Table 1 illustrates the means and standard deviations for…” You must decide how to present your findings so that the reader can see at a glance what the data show: In addition, the text of this section must tell the reader what to look for in your graphs or tables; you will tell the reader what relationships you see in the data. Don’t take the view that “the data speak for themselves.” You should be careful not to interpret your data in this section. Just include a mini-explanation here; the real interpretation happens in the next section.
Discussion

The Results section is “just the facts ma’am.” The Discussion section tells the reader what you think the facts mean. The sections are separated for the same reason that editorials and news stories are separated. Your Discussion section should be organized in the shape of a triangle; start with the specific and move to the more general. You should start with a brief description of the results from the present experiment, and relate the results in terms of your hypotheses. You might want to compare the results of this paper to results from other relevant studies; for example, you could explain why you did or did not replicate the results of previous studies. Finally, summarize what this finding means in terms of the bigger picture.

It is helpful to think of the discussion as a continuation of the Introduction. The Introduction made it clear what question you are asking. Now that you have the data in hand, what is the answer to that question? That is perhaps the most important part of the paper. Explain how your results and hypotheses, as presented in the Results and Introduction, support (or do not support) the theories underlying your work. If the data support the hypothesis, then explain what that means in terms of your theory; if they don’t, then explain that as well, in terms of your theory. The reader should see very clearly how the results reflect the theory, and how they support or do not support the hypotheses.

Finally, any problems or complaints that you may have thought of belong in the Discussion (e.g., “The data do or do not support the hypothesis, but the following problems mean that these explanations may not be valid – bad data collection, bad participants, bad measure, etc.). The Discussion is also the place to point out any applications or implications of your findings, as well as any future steps that might be taken to investigate further.
References
To reference means to give credit to the source articles and readings that gave you information and ideas that you used in your paper. You cite so that the reader knows where to look for more information. Most citations will be in your Introduction and Discussion sections. Each entry should have been cited in the report, and all items cited should be referenced. You should reference ideas that are not common knowledge, not obvious as to where they came from, or ideas that you did not come up with on your own. First you must decide what kind of reference you have (article, book, etc.) and then follow the format for that particular kind of reference. References are not numbered; they are in alphabetical order by the first author’s last name. Do not use the reference list from a published article as your format (other than the sample papers); APA requirements may have changed since the article was published.
Footnotes

1 If you have any footnotes, they go after your References. You number them in superscript format and indent the first line of each, with no extra space added between footnotes.
Appendix A

If you have supporting materials you’d like to include (like a copy of your experiment script, debriefing, questionnaire(s), advertisements, and so on), then label them as an Appendix and include them right after your Reference page. If you have multiple items, then label them Appendix A, Appendix B, and so on. Remember to refer the reader to the Appendix somewhere in the body of your paper (probably in your Method section).
Table 1

*Mean Attitude Alignment as a Function of Centrality of Attitude to Self and Centrality of Attitude to Other*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Central to Other</th>
<th>Peripheral to Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central to Self</td>
<td>1.33&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>0.71&lt;sub&gt;b&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral to Self</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>1.40&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Higher numbers indicate greater attitude alignment. Significant simple effects are indicated by differing subscripts.
On the *same page* as your figure caption will be the actual bar graph (or line graph) that illustrates your results (if you include one). You can use various programs to create the graph; I use PowerPoint myself. . .

The page with your graph does not have to have a page number or running head.

*Figure 1.* Figure captions are not in title case and serve as both an explanation of the figure as well as the title. They go right below and on the same page as the figure.