

Structure of a Research Paper, Plagiarism and Documentation

20th Lecture

Structure of a Research Paper

While academic disciplines vary on the exact format and style of journal articles in their field, most papers contain similar content and are divided in parts that typically follow the same logical flow. Following is a list of the parts commonly found in research papers.

- Title
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion/Conclusion
- References/Bibliography

Structure of a Research Paper

- **Title**

The title should be specific and indicate the problem the research project addresses using keywords that will be helpful in literature reviews in the future.

- **Abstract**

The abstract is used by readers to quickly review the overall content of the paper. The abstract should provide a complete synopsis of the research paper and should introduce the topic and the specific research question, provide a statement regarding methodology and should provide a general statement about the results and the findings. Because it is really a summary of the entire research paper, it is often written last.

- **Introduction**

The introduction begins by introducing the broad overall topic and providing basic background information. It then narrows down to the specific research question relating to this topic. It provides the purpose and focus for the rest of the paper and sets up the justification for the research.

- **Literature Review**

The purpose of the literature review is to describe past important research and relate it specifically to the research problem. It should be a synthesis of the previous literature and the new idea being researched. The review should examine the major theories related to the topic to date and their contributors. It should include all relevant findings from credible sources, such as academic books and peer-reviewed journal articles.

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- **Methods**

The methods section will describe the research design and methodology used to complete the study. The general rule of thumb is that readers should be provided with enough detail to replicate the study.

- **Results**

In this section, the results of the analysis are presented. How the results are presented will depend upon whether the research study was quantitative or qualitative in nature. This section should focus only on results that are directly related to the research or the problem. Graphs and tables should only be used when there is too much data to efficiently include it within the text. This section should present the results, but not discuss their significance.

- **Discussion/Conclusion**

This section should be a discussion of the results and the implications on the field, as well as other fields. The hypothesis should be answered and validated by the interpretation of the results. This section should also discuss how the results relate to previous research mentioned in the literature review, any cautions about the findings, and potential for future research.

- **References/Bibliography**

The research paper is not complete without the list of references. This section should be an alphabetized list of all the academic sources of information utilized in the paper. The format of the references will match the format and style used in the paper.