

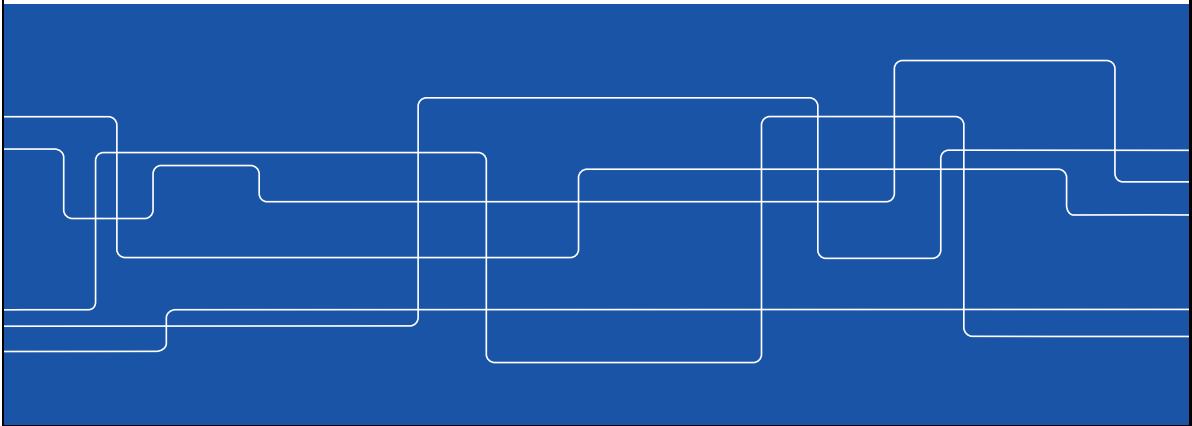
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# II2202: Writing the Discussion section

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## What is the purpose of the discussion section?

1. In this section you:
    - You summarize your most important findings,
    - Your answers to the questions that you posed, and
    - Explain how your results:
      - Support these answers,
      - How do these answers **fit with** or **contradict** the conclusions of others (with appropriate citations to the literature\*),
      - Are there exceptions to the general pattern?
      - Suggest future work to resolve open issues
  2. You state your interpretations, opinions, and the theoretical or practical implications of what you have found
- The discussion forms the “heart” of the document.

\* This should be the literature you cited in your Introduction.

† In a paper, while in a thesis you will have a Future work section in the final chapter or in a separate chapter.

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## Components of the discussion section [write in present tense]

Start by **summarizing** your key findings

Work from the general to the specifics of **each of your findings**

– using literature, theory, and practice:

- Describe if (and how) you achieved your goal(s), i.e., if you solved the problem
- Answer each of the questions you raised
- Describe how the results support your hypothesis or refute it
- State the evidence for each of your conclusions
- Citing the relevant work of others

End with: A statement of the (practical and general) **importance** of your results and conclusions and **how one should act given this new knowledge**

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## For each major finding

State your:

1. Answer
2. Results
3. Cite others to support, compare, contrast, ... to your results

Defend your answers and do not shy away from discussing conflicting explanations

(Often the most illuminating part of the discussion)

If the results were unexpected, be sure to discuss them

(Later someone else may be able to explain them,  
now that you have identified them)

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## Add appropriate tables, graphics, pictures,

...

Make the patterns that you have detected easier for your reader to understand your argument

Useful to shown unexpected results (or anomalies  $\equiv$  the results that you cannot explain)

These elements are **not** here to show your results (as these were shown in the Results section), but rather to help in your discussion.

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## Suggested Future Research

Your suggestions for future research should be feasible in the near term, rather than some far future

⇒ **Keep in mind that one (or more) of your readers may try to follow your suggestions!**

If your suggestions for future research could have been done within your project, why didn't you do them?

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## Avoiding common mistakes

Do **not** claim more than your evidence supports

⇒ **Avoid overgeneralization!**

Every project has a limited time schedule, budget, staffing, ...

⇒ **Do not apologize for limitations/weaknesses**, rather  
**state clearly how they may affect your interpretations  
and the validity of your findings**

Discuss everything and make sure that you have addressed all  
of the results

⇒ **Avoid “ignoring” part of your data!**

Even if you do not understand it – you have to talk about it!

⇒ **Be concise!**

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## References

- [sfedit 2013] San Francisco Edit, 'Fourteen Steps to Writing an Effective Discussion Section', San Francisco Edit, Mill Valley, California, Sep. 2013 [Online]. Available: <http://www.sfedit.net/discussion.pdf> . [Accessed: 17-Aug-2015]
- [UW 2014] The Writing Center@The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 'Academic and Professional Writing: Scientific Reports: Writer's Handbook: Discussion Section', 29-Aug-2014. [Online]. Available: [https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/SciRep\\_Disc.html](https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/SciRep_Disc.html). [Accessed: 17-Aug-2015]



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# ¿Questions?

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