

INDEPENDENT

V E R S U S

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V A R I A B L E S

COMPARING THE TWO KINDS

The dependent variable is usually the focus or outcome of the study.

We hypothesise that the independent variable causes change in the dependent variable

For example, we may hypothesise that a certain treatment causes a reduction in length of illness. Length of illness is the dependent variable.

Treatment type is what we hypothesise to be causing the variation in the length of illness

The dependent variable does not cause changes in the independent variable. Length of illness does not change treatment

Our experiment hypothesises that treatment will have an effect on length of illness.

To find the dependent variable look at the design of the experiment: what is it that the researchers are OBSERVING? (Length of illness)

To find the independent variable look at the design of the experiment: what is it that the researchers are controlling? (Treatment)