

Writing With Style

APA Style Made Easy

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Chapter 6

The Discussion Section

Contents

(not necessarily in this order)

- Inevitable
 - Evaluate results against hypotheses and/or research questions
- Creative
 - What is the interesting story here
- Confessional
 - Limitations

INEVITABLE

Hypothesis supported?

- Assess results of main hypothesis.
- Assess results related to main research question.

CREATIVE

Discuss all results

- But discuss each result in a way that makes sense for that result .
- Creative ideas on the following slides will apply to some results and not others.

- Similarities to previous research findings
- Differences between this and other research
- How results relate to theory or theories mentioned in Introduction section
- Alternative explanations for these results
- Any negative results

Implications

- Theoretical
 - Should be logically related to Introduction section
- Practical, e.g.:
 - Clinical practice
 - Education
 - Policy
 - Child-rearing
 - Business practices

Future research

- Suggest the next logical step
 - Given the theoretical context or application
 - Given the current result

CONFESSSIONAL

Limitations

- Generalizability
 - To other groups
 - To other situations
- Effect size may not be large
- Correlation rather than causation
- Self-report
- Unavoidable confounds
- Choice of design where more than one reasonable choice exists

But not

- Small sample
- Poor design
- Lack of experimental control where control would have been possible
- Or anything else a good researcher would plan to avoid

Order of ideas

- All of the above can be mixed and matched.
E.g., a specific result can support a hypothesis and, thereby, a theory. It can extend previous findings. It may be limited by the real-world limits of testing this hypothesis. The result may suggest future research.
- End on a high note, a take-home message, rather than on a limitation.