

# PSST Workshop:

How to Write Assignments in Psychology

By Chris & Ally

# Workshop Outline

- ▶ General Writing Tips
- ▶ How to write a Lab Report in Psychology (eg for PSYC1030 assessment)
- ▶ How to write an Essay in Psychology (eg for PSYC1020 assessment)
- ▶ Referencing in APA style

# General Writing Tips

- ▶ Start early!
- ▶ Be short and to the point i.e., don't write more words than you need to
- ▶ Avoid using complicated words or words that you don't understand
- ▶ Proof read and read your assignment out loud when editing
- ▶ Read widely and then only discuss articles that you understand
- ▶ Before submitting:
  - ▶ Read the marking criteria one more time
  - ▶ Make sure your assignment matches the assignment goal



# Lab Report - Title Page

- ▶ You must include a title page as the first page
- ▶ The title should include the independent and dependent variables
- ▶ Include your name, course code, university, semester, and tutor's name

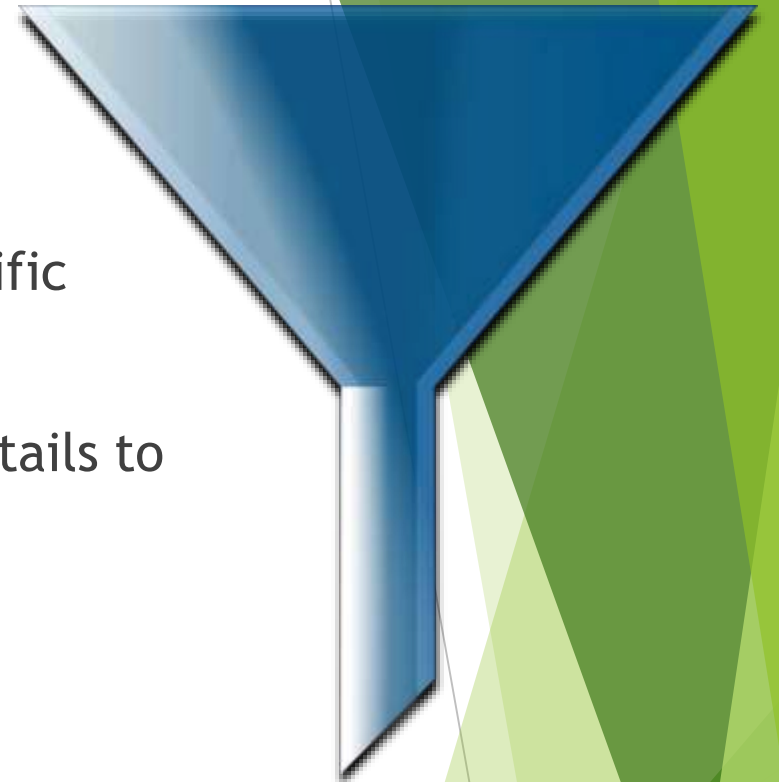


# Lab Report - Abstract

- ▶ A short summary of your report
  - ▶ Aim of the present study (1 sentence) - what was the purpose?
  - ▶ Hypothesis (1 sentence) - Include size and direction of the predicted results
  - ▶ Method (2-3 sentences) - short description of the design, participants, and procedure
  - ▶ Results (1-2 sentences) - the analytic technique used, findings - including the size and direction of results but no statistics
  - ▶ Interpretation (1 sentence) - Was the hypothesis supported?
  - ▶ Concluding Remark (1 sentence) - mention limitations and directions for future research.

# Lab Report - Introduction

- ▶ Funnel Structure - Start broad and then become more specific
- ▶ Introductory Paragraph
  - ▶ 1-2 very broad statements or interesting background details to introduce the topic
  - ▶ Define the important key terms
  - ▶ Broad aim of the present study
- ▶ Summary of Research Evidence Paragraphs
  - ▶ Explain the theoretical framework
  - ▶ Summarise previous studies - What was the purpose? Who were the participants? What did they do? What did they find? What do these results mean? How do the results relate to the theoretical framework?



# Lab Report - Introduction cont.

- ▶ Present Study Paragraph
  - ▶ Limitations of previous research
  - ▶ Rationale (i.e., how does the current study address a gap in the literature?)
  - ▶ Purpose of the current study
  - ▶ Participants
  - ▶ Brief Method (1-2 sentences) - What did the participants do?
  - ▶ Hypotheses - What did we expect to find?

# Lab Report - Method

## ▶ Participants

- ▶ How many?
- ▶ Occupation (e.g., students)
- ▶ Descriptive (i.e., gender, age range, mean age, and standard deviation)
- ▶ How were they recruited? (e.g., Was it voluntary or were there incentives to participate?)

## ▶ Design

- ▶ What was the design? For example, was it within participants, between participants, quasi-experimental, self-report, cross-sectional, longitudinal?
- ▶ What were the independent and dependent variables?
- ▶ How were the IV and DV operationalised?



# Lab Report - Method cont.

## ▶ Materials/Measures

- ▶ List all the materials and measures (e.g., what was the title of the questionnaire? Was it adapted from a study?)
- ▶ Give examples of items
- ▶ Include the reliability for the measure
- ▶ If you have included the measure in the Appendix make sure to refer to it here

## ▶ Procedure

- ▶ Description of the study - it should include enough detail so that someone else could replicate it
- ▶ When and where did it take place? Who administered it?
- ▶ For experimental studies, what did participants do differently in each condition?

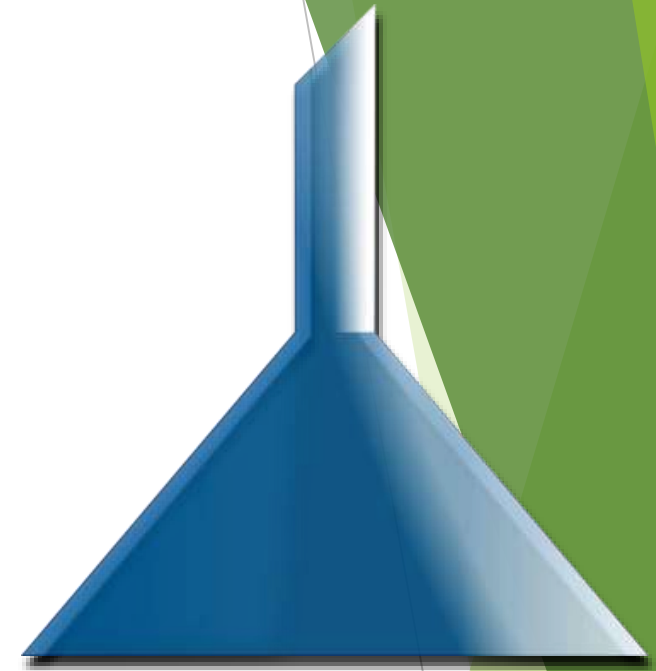


# Lab Report - Results

- ▶ This section can vary from course to course so make sure you attend tutorials and check with your tutors what they expect in this section
- ▶ Preliminary Analyses
  - ▶ Report group means and standard deviations (if relevant)
- ▶ Primary Analyses
  - ▶ Name the statistical analyses you chose (e.g., an independent groups t-test)
  - ▶ Report appropriate statistics (e.g., t-scores, p values)
  - ▶ Report the magnitude (e.g., are the results significant or not?) as well as the direction of the results (e.g., which group performed better?)

# Lab Report - Discussion

- ▶ Inverse Funnel - start specific and then get broader
- ▶ Restate your findings
  - ▶ Restate the aim of the present study
  - ▶ Restate the hypothesis of the present study
  - ▶ Restate the current results (avoid statistical jargon)
  - ▶ Comment on whether the results supported your hypothesis and prior research. If they do not you need to suggest a possible alternative explanation.
- ▶ Theoretical contributions
  - ▶ Restate the gaps in the literature
  - ▶ Comment on how the present study addresses those gaps



# Lab Report - Discussion cont.

- ▶ Practical Implications
  - ▶ Discuss how the present findings addressed any real world issues
- ▶ Limitations
  - ▶ Mention any flaws in the study and how these might affect the findings
- ▶ Direction for future research
  - ▶ Mention suggestions for future research that is consistent with your findings
- ▶ Conclusion (3-5 sentences max.)
  - ▶ Briefly restate the aim, hypothesis and results
  - ▶ Briefly restate limitations and future research directions



# Academic Essay Writing: Style

- ▶ Use multiple and diverse information sources
  - ▶ Avoid assumptions or presenting personal opinions as facts
  - ▶ Use well-structured paragraphs to address the key points of your essay
  - ▶ Paraphrase instead of direct quotes - use your own words to explain the articles you are including in your review
- ▶ **Common Mistakes:**
    - ▶ Too much use of one or two references
    - ▶ Unsupported statements
    - ▶ Assignment does not match one or more criteria
    - ▶ Two or more ideas per paragraph
    - ▶ Paragraphs that are too short or too long
    - ▶ Present isolated sentences (without explanations, examples, or links to your argument)

# Essays: Introduction

- ▶ Introduce the TOPIC including context (place), key definitions, and (if needed) some data to illustrate the importance of the issue
- ▶ Present the aim of your assignment (focus) using your own words to explain what specific points of the topic you will explore
- ▶ Clearly state your argument/view on the issue
- ▶ Explain why this is important (theoretical and/or practical relevance)
- ▶ Finally, present an outline of the essay structure. For instance: *“Firstly I will introduce the topic area, then I will describe and discuss some empirical studies,” etc.*
- ▶ **Common Mistakes:**
  - ▶ Key concepts are left out or not clearly defined
  - ▶ The essay goal/argument is not clearly stated
  - ▶ Outline is not included or it does not describe the main essay contents

# Essays: Body - Literature Review

- ▶ Introduce this section and how it is structured
  - ▶ Describe & critically analyse key concepts, models, and theories
  - ▶ Show evidence for and against your argument
  - ▶ To finish, highlight the key points of your review and link to the next section
  - ▶ Only include articles that are relevant to your argument (for and against) - you do not need to include everything you read
  - ▶ At the end of your review, the gaps in the knowledge and the need of further research should be clear
- 
- ▶ **Common Mistakes:**
    - ▶ Review is limited to very few one-sided articles
    - ▶ Use of sources that are not really relevant to the topic
    - ▶ Review is presented as a group of independent summaries
    - ▶ Links between paragraphs are unclear



CC image source: <http://www.uglydogbooks.com/>

# Essays: Body - Discussion

- ▶ Discuss theories and empirical findings in relation to your argument
- ▶ Identify and discuss strengths and limitations of the studies/evidence presented
- ▶ Link the main conclusions of your review back to your argument (does the evidence support your argument?)
- ▶ **Common Mistakes:**
  - ▶ Links between theories, empirical evidence, and personal argument are vague
  - ▶ Strengths and limitations are identified but not clearly explained/justified



# Essays: Conclusion

- ▶ Come back to your essay goal and show how you have addressed the issue and the key results that you found
- ▶ Suggest further studies and/or practical implications
- ▶ **Common Mistakes:**
  - ▶ Including new ideas and references



CC image source: <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-computer-skills-assessment.htm>

# References (APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition)

## ▶ In-text example:

In a quasi-experimental study, Jones, Brown and Smith (2009) demonstrated that...

- ▶ Reference list: in alphabetical order of the author's surname
- ▶ Only include references that you have used in your paper

## ▶ Journal Articles:

- ▶ Author(s) surname(s), Initial(s) & Author(s) surname(s), Initial(s). (Year). Title. *Journal's name*, Volume number(Issue number, if available), Page numbers. doi: number

## ▶ Books:

- ▶ Author's surname, Initial(s). (Year). *Title*. Location: Publisher.

## ▶ Book Chapter:

- ▶ Author's surname, Initial(s). (Year). Title. In Editor's initials, Surname (Eds.). *Book Title* (page numbers), Location: Publisher.

# APA Contd.

## Journal Article:

Gibson, A. F., Lee, C., & Crabb, S. (2014). 'If you grow them, know them': Discursive constructions of the pink ribbon culture of breast cancer in the Australian context. *Feminism & Psychology*, 24(4), 521-541. doi: 10.1177/0959353514548100

Note use of spaces  
between names and  
initials

Check spacing

Indent  
using 1  
tab space

## Book:

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Capital letter after :

## Book Chapter:

Chamberlain, K. (2004). Qualitative research, reflexivity and context. In M. Murray (Ed.), *Critical health psychology* (pp. 121-136). New York: Palgrave.

## References:

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<https://www.library.uq.edu.au/help/referencing-style-guides>

ABC  
order

## And finally...

- ▶ Remember to check the marking criteria before submitting your assignment 😊
- ▶ PSST Service:
  - ▶ Website: <http://www.psy.uq.edu.au/current-students/psst/>
  - ▶ Email: [psst@psy.uq.edu.au](mailto:psst@psy.uq.edu.au)
  - ▶ Drop-ins and appointments welcome!

# WRITER



What my friends think I do



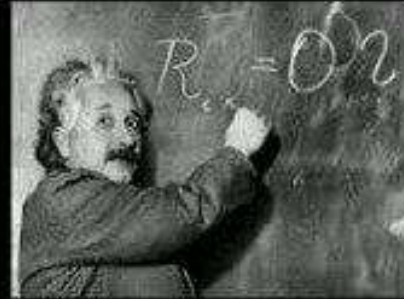
What my mom thinks I do



What society thinks I do



What publishers think I do



What I think I do



What I really do

WeKnowMemes

Good luck!