

U is a beautiful shape for your journal article. version 2.0



Introduction

Goal: Both generalists and technical readers know why they should care

- Describe the problem at hand in a way that readers understand its importance.
- Set up the contribution they can expect to learn about and why such contribution is needed.
- Foreshadow how you will make the contribution.
- Provide operational definitions.



Literature Review

Goal: Technical readers know enough about the technical state-of-the-art you will employ in the Body or Discussion

- Situate your work in relation to the existing knowledge.
- Prepare readers to make sense of the research design and frameworks you present in the Body.
- Set up any theory, analytic concern, or prior result you refer to in the Discussion.



Body

Goal: Readers should know all specifics and details about your research design and arguments

- Describe your methods, frameworks, theories, data, analysis, and findings.
- Produce the evidence for your claims; this is the guts of the paper.
- Focus on your intended contribution, and minimize detours to other “interesting” aspects of your data if they aren’t important to your contribution.

General

General

The Introduction and Conclusion are on the same level: The Introduction sets up the Conclusion and both present your most general remarks.

The Literature Review and Discussion are on the same level: The Literature Review sets up the Discussion and both bridge between generalities of the problem and specifics of your research.

Specific



Conclusion

Goal: Both generalists and technical readers know your advance and why it matters

- Recalling the problem in the Introduction, explain:
 - How do your findings make a contribution, and what is the advance, in more general terms?
 - To whom does this matter and what can they do with it?
 - What is the new challenge now should future work build upon this work?



Discussion

Goal: Technical readers understand the underlying meaning and implications of your research

- Recalling the technical context in the Literature Review, interpret your findings in the Body and explain:
 - What is new about your findings and what is different or supportive of prior work?
 - What is the strength, limitation, and/or weakness of your work?

Tips for authors

Build up your own U

- Know your intended journal and audience for publication before you start writing. Keep in mind what is valued for publishing in that journal (a good thing to ask colleagues/mentors about).
- Draft sections in an order that makes sense to you. You can start from methods or results.
- Think early about what the major contributions of this paper will be and focus on them.

Tell a story

- Take the reader on a journey. Good papers tell a story. e.g., is there a tension your story resolves?
- Avoid repeating yourself throughout the paper. Early sections can foreshadow what comes next, but they should not fully disclose what later sections will add to the story.
- Provide guideposts that help readers follow the evolving story, keeping the current part in context.

Take the perspective of your reader

- Choose your words to be clear and precise; communicate the exact meaning of your research.
- Use as little jargon as possible. Jargon can be exclusionary; it will limit your audience.
- Help the reader understand how you are using terms, concepts, variables, etc. – and also help them follow the connections you are making (e.g., from data to an interpretation)

Learn more about scientific writing

- Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS)
- American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for:
 - qualitative research
 - quantitative research
 - mixed methods research articles