

Writing Tips
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1. Initial Step

- Most important is to look at the appropriate Consort library guideline
- Decide what is your major message
- Decide what audience would be interested in this
- Find journal by determining the audience who would be interested
- Check where prior research on this topic was published (look at reference sections of prior articles on this topic)
- Look at tables of contents of possible journals, similar articles
- Look at jI impact factor- match to quality of study
- Decide format – brief report, letter, full article.
- Redo literature search via Pub Med and PsychoInfo, NIH Project Reporter, clinicaltrials.gov.
- Authorship. It is never too early to discuss. Remember author must contribute intellectually. People differ on whether lab head should be at end? Remember, all authors – not just first- are responsible for content.

Many Options

Journal	IF	Journal	IF
Addiction	4.58	Health Psychology	3.832
Addictive Behaviors	2.578	Cancer Survivorship	3.57
Am J Addictions	1.74	Consulting and Clinical Psychology	5.01
Am J Health Behavior	1.572	National Medical Association	1.16
Am J Health Promotion	2.37	J of Behavioral Medicine	2.216
Am J of Drug and Alcohol Abuse	1.55	J of Clinical Oncology	18.04
Am J Preventive Medicine	5.349	J of Substance Abuse	1.25
Am J Public Health	3.93	J of Substance Abuse Treatment	2.914
Annals Behavioral Medicine	5.884	JAMA	30.03
Archives of Internal Medicine	11.46	New England Journal of Medicine	51.05
Cancer, Epidemiology Biomarkers & Prevention	4.559	Nicotine & Tobacco Research	2.477
Drug & Alcohol Dependence	3.951	Patient Education & Counseling	2.933
Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology	2.545	Preventive Medicine	4.257
Health Education and Behavior	1.682	Psychology of Addictive Behaviors	2.321
Health Education Research	2.442	Tobacco Control	4.111

2. Write abstract early on to make yourself have pithy rationale and a major message in place but realize it will change later
- 3 Decide on title – what words important to include (think independent and dependent variables) , include methodology. If one major conclusion then better to state study conclusion than just topic area.
- 4 . Outline paper

5. Introduction

- State problem or purpose or hypothesis early on
- State what is currently known and gaps, include studies in press
- Consider historical information about how topic evolved over time
- Tell a story- don't just describe every study.
- Intro must give rationale for study
- Start broad and work to specific problem
- Use present tense
- State significance –theoretical vs practical
- Include what reader needs to know prior to reading methods
- Do not avoid saying it's a replication test

6. Methods

- Usual topics are design overview, participants (how recruited, inclusion criteria, sample size, characteristics), procedures (best in chronological order), measures, data analysis.
- Usually description of subjects are in methods, not results. Justify methodological decisions
- If complicated methods have study design figure
- Use past tense
- Can put details of methods in appendix

7. Results

- Begin with internal/external validity tests, data on compliance, comment on data distributions,
- Report all results even negative ones
- The major result in figure
- Figures show relationships, tables show actual values

8. Conclusion

- Begin with summary of results
- Note magnitude of effects as important as statistical reliability
- How likely is outcome due to intervention.
- Are there alternative explanations
- Are results consistent with prior results and with theory
- Emphasize only important results-don't need to comment on every outcome
- State assets and limitations
- Qualifiers needed
- Basic science, clinical and policy significance
- Present tense
- Future work – be specific
- End with concluding statement

Style

- Active voice, avoid “to be” verbs
- Avoid jargon
- Avoid “so and so showed that”
- Short sentences
- Parallel construction
- Avoid noun clusters
- Avoid vague antecedents; greater than what?
- Can use first person
- Topic sentences help the reader know what’s coming
- Avoid “ing”
- Avoid overuse of commas
- Check paragraphing

Some helpful synonyms

Significant = meaningful, substantial, important

Valid = true, proven, authentic, legitimate, real

Show = found, document, confirm, determine, validate, verify, evidence, exhibit, demonstrate

Decrease = diminish, reduce, lessen, decline, subside, shorten, lower, minimize, weaken

Increase = add, rise, boost, enhance, gain

Reliable = dependable, stable, consistent, predictable, accurate