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 journals - impact factor - match to quality of study
Decide format – brief report, letter, full article.

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.

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

### Many Options

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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