COMPONENTS OF A MANUSCRIPT

Abstract: provides a brief summary of the research, including the purpose and main findings.

Read the abstract first to get a brief idea of the objective and content of the article.

Introduction: presents the research question, previous literature and hypothesis

Read the Introduction (background and rationale) to get a feel for the framework of a topic and why it is of interest. The introduction will include a summary of pertinent literature, an explanation of the researcher’s purpose and a statement of the hypothesis.

• Why is this problem important?
• How does the study relate to previous research or literature?
• What are the researcher’s hypotheses or predictions?
• What are the theoretical implications of this research?

Methods: provides an overview of how the study was conducted

The methods will provide information about the participants, measures and procedures used in the study. Understanding the population, measures and time frame helps to conceptualize findings.

Results: reports data and statistical analyses, including tables and figures

The results section will summarize the data analysis and findings. If you are having difficulty understanding the statistical results, read the discussion section, which will report the main findings in sentence form.

Discussion: examines and interprets the results with respect to the hypothesis

The discussion section will tell you if the data support the authors conclusions and why or why not. It may also discuss flaws in the research and suggestions for future experiments.

• What are the findings?
• Do the data support the researchers conclusions?
• What do the conclusions imply about human behavior?
• What does this research contribute to the field?
• What questions remain for further research?
TECHNIQUES FOR EFFICIENT READING:

**Pay attention to headings:** Headings highlight main ideas and serve as a road map to direct you through the paper.

**Highlight, Underline or Circle:** Mark key terms, ideas or definitions. Be selective and only highlight the most important details that you will want to return to later.

**Write in the Margins:** Write down summaries or questions that arise while reading. Take notes in your own words to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

IDENTIFYING COMMON THEMES ACROSS ARTICLES

Look back at your notes and find the “big picture” ideas. Make a brief note of the main ideas and evidence in each paper. Then look for common themes between papers, and create an outline.

- How do the articles relate to one another?
- Are there contradictions between articles?
- Does one article answer questions posed by another?
- What are the common themes among the articles?
How do psychology papers differ from other disciplines in terms of style and structure?

Psychology papers are more similar to other science papers than to English papers in that the emphasis is placed on effectively articulating empirical findings and theory rather than using visually descriptive language or direct quotes. Psychology papers do not use direct quotes, because the specifics of the language are not emphasized. Instead, paraphrasing is used to synthesize information. The tone needs to be formal and concise, but it doesn't have to be dry. The use of headings in psychology papers facilitates structure and flow without requiring the use of elaborate transitions.

How are references done in psychology papers?

Psychology papers use APA format, which provides specific guidelines for how you write the paper and cite you references. One important thing to know is that you need to cite any information found in you references that isn't common knowledge (should be limited, e.g. well-known historical facts, general observations and opinions, and unacknowledged information in multiple sources). APA in-text citations go at the end of a section (not to exceed a paragraph) in which you discuss a new reference (e.g., phrase, sentence, 2+ sentences, or paragraph), and you need to put a citation in every time you switch between information sources. If you are describing several studies in one sentence, you should cite all of them, like this:

Researchers have found a correlation between shoe size and allergies, although the nature of that relationship remains a mystery (Smith & Jones, 2004; Allen & Carter, 2007).

The reference page includes all of the references used in your paper. The order for a journal article includes the following: author(s), year, title of article, journal title, volume number, and page numbers. Please see handouts regarding formatting the reference page.

APA is really easy once you get used to it. The Writing Center has handouts and guides for this citation style. You can also check out this website: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/.

Can I be Creative in a psychology papers?
Of course! Although you need to keep a formal, concise tone, use creativity to synthesize and interpret your articles (e.g. finding themes). Do not try to be creative by adding a catchy phrase or word or by using colloquialisms.

Can I use first person?

Only use first person when discussing your hypothesis. You should avoid it in the rest of your paper.