

Paper Writing in Practice

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Writing the results section

The results section

- should clearly explain what each figure or table illustrates / the logic behind it
- should provide enough information to understand, but not any irrelevant or distracting information
- should cover experiments without delving deeply into the *methods or implications*
 - a first-level conclusion only, i.e. answer the question that had been raised without going into all possible implications
 - discuss implications mainly as far as necessary to clarify why experiments described later were done
 - state any conclusions objectively
- editor will look here and in figures/tables for validation of the conclusions that are drawn here and in the discussion

- Subtitles can tell the story of the paper for you

- Use simple vs complex terms, e.g.:
 - “effective” vs “efficacious”
 - “use” vs “utilize”
 - “close” vs “proximal” (except in the sense of orientation/axes)

- Be as precise as possible and quantitative, e.g.:
 - do not use “different” when you mean “multiple” or “several”
 - do not use “correlation” when you mean “relationship”
 - do not use “while” when you mean “although” or “whereas”
 - do not use “the rate was faster at a higher temperature” when you mean “the rate at 37°C was 20% faster than that at 25°C”

- Good writing requires
 - clear links between sentences and paragraphs – so that the point can be grasped more quickly
 - use transitions between sentences
 - link back to old information using the “topic position”
 - that you clearly spell out your interpretations/conclusions – leaving the reader mid-thought may leave him/her:
 - wondering which of two interpretations is meant
 - completely in the dark, especially if unfamiliar with the topic

Rules of thumb, for results sections and more generally in your writing:

- **Sentence level:** One idea per sentence. In the case of the results section, don't write a sentence that makes it sound like there were two purposes to the experiment:
To evaluate the contribution of heat shock to the cleft-palate phenotype, we intercrossed the Tg(hsp:egfp) and Tg(grungy:egfp) lines to visualize tissue layer and the positions of migrating precursors simultaneously.
- **Paragraph level:** No more than one major finding each (don't make paragraphs several pages long!)
 - Include topic sentence at beginning
 - Include summary or conclusion at end, to lead logically to the next one
 - In between, elaborate on topic in a logical order (chronology, importance, pro vs con)