

Discussing Your Research Results

In scholarly publications, the final or penultimate section of a manuscript often discusses the results of your data-gathering and data-analyzing practices. This goal of this section is to demonstrate how your methodology was able to elicit particular results and, furthermore, how your findings can benefit other researchers.

Having a well-crafted explanation of your research findings/results can highlight the impact and relevance of your investigations. In doing so, you can reinforce your own position as a contributor to an on-going scholarly conversation. Conversely, a poorly-written results/discussion section can make it difficult to see how your research can benefit others who are interested in the same ideas or issues.

This worksheet will help you draft a conclusion or discussion/results section for a journal article, academic essay, or book chapter. To clarify, this worksheet is not an "instruction set" that will help you write perfectly every time. Rather, the questions below are designed to foster a critical awareness of how you plan to explain the larger significance of your research findings. Lastly, please be as specific as possible when answering the following questions. The more specific you are, the easier it will be to write and revise.

Questions for Drafting a "Results" Section:

1. What is the single most important finding or results from your data-gathering/data-analyzing practices? In what ways did your methodology elicit these results?

In answering this question, you need to explain how your methodology (i.e., the processes used to gather, code, organize, and/or analyze your data) led to very specific discoveries or findings within your research.

2. What are some limitations or shortcomings of these results?

For example, did you have a small sample size when discussing quantitative data? Were you conducting research in a highly-controlled environment (which may not mimic real-world conditions)?

3. How might the limitations or shortcoming you identified in Question Two help you refine or revise your initial research question?

In other words, look back at your initial research question and explain how you would modify this research question in order to account for potential limitations in your original findings.

4. Who would benefit most from applying the lessons learned from your research to new ideas or circumstances?

For example, let's say you are an education research and you are examined impact of participatory learning experiences in college-level math classes. In this case, you could say that

professors and curricula designers in traditional four-year universities would benefit the most from your research.

The goal of this question to to reflect upon how your findings (which are elicited by your methodology or theoretical framework) can contribute to on-going scholarly conversations.