

The Psychology Lab Checklist

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Title Page

- My title is informative, mentioning both the independent and dependent variable(s).
- My title is no more than 12 words in length (e.g., The Effect of Sleep Deprivation on Visual Episodic Memory). It is centered and approximately 3" - 4" from the top of the page.
- My name is centered beneath the title. Centered beneath my name is the name of my institution (i.e., Hamilton College).
- I have a running head (i.e., an abbreviated title of the paper) that is in all capitals and no more than 50 characters. It appears at the top of the title page (not in a header) and is typed flush left. "Running head" is typed before the statement of this shortened title (e.g., Running head: EFFECT OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION ON MEMORY).
- I have a short title (i.e., the first three words of the title) in a header that is right justified and followed by the page number (e.g., The Effect of 1).

Abstract

- My abstract is the second page of my lab report. The word "Abstract" is written directly above the first line of this paragraph (without quotations).
- My abstract is no more than 120 words and is a brief and concise description of what I am investigating, participants, method, results, and further conclusions of the study.
- My abstract is not indented.

Introduction

- My title is centered above the first paragraph of my introduction, the third page of my lab report.
- My paper begins with an anecdote or grabs the reader's attention in some way.
- After an introductory paragraph, I review previous research, which I present topically, not chronologically.
- The general presentation of previous research leads logically to my specific hypothesis, which I state at the end of the introduction.
- In addition to presenting previous research, my introduction conveys to the reader the purpose of the present study (e.g., The purpose of the present study was to extend the findings of previous researchers...).

Method

- Subheadings are used to identify descriptions of participants, materials, and procedure
- I describe the participants:
 - The number of participants (number of men, number of women).
 - Where the participants were from (college students, parents of 3-month-old children, etc.).
 - How I recruited the participants.
 - How I assigned participants to groups (e.g., random assignment).
 - How I compensated the participants for taking part in the study.
- I describe the materials:
 - I describe measures in detail (e.g., I used a 12-item measure of anxiety ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always) to evaluate participants' levels of anxiety on a day-to-day basis. Half of the items were reverse-scored).
 - I describe any equipment used (e.g., eye tracker) including the company name and model.
 - I do not list pen, paper, or other insignificant items as materials.

- I describe the procedure:
 - I describe what took place in temporal order (i.e., from beginning to end).
 - I do not describe any information explained previously in the participants or materials sections.
- Someone reading my method would be able to exactly replicate the study.
- I write as concisely and explicitly as possible.

Results

- I *describe* the results of the study; I do not *explain* them.
- I state which statistical test I used to analyze my results (e.g., I used an independent samples *t* test to determine...) and I closely follow APA format to present my results, remembering to include degrees of freedom for all statistical tests.
- I include means and standard deviations in parentheses in the proper format [e.g., ($M = 2.25, SD = .16$)].
- I state whether or not the results supported my hypothesis (e.g., As hypothesized, sleep deprivation did affect visual episodic memory; people who were sleep deprived performed more poorly on a test of visual episodic memory ($M = 12.13, SD = 0.35$) than did people who were not sleep deprived ($M = 9.34, SD = 0.67$)).
- I use italics where appropriate (e.g., *t* test, *F*, *r*, *p*).
- I round numbers to two decimal places.
- I reference all tables and figures (e.g., As shown in Figure 1...) included in the report.

Discussion

- I briefly restate my main findings and note whether they support the hypotheses.
- I discuss my findings, providing explanations for both expected and unexpected results.
 - I discuss research that supports or contradicts my findings, and I tie my work into a broader theoretical framework.
- I discuss a few potential limitations of my study (but not too many...focus on the positive!)
- I discuss substantive ideas for future research in detail by explaining their purpose and how they could be tested in a research study.
 - When a future research idea directly relates to a limitation, I include it in the same paragraph with the limitation.
 - I make sure to include ideas for future research that go beyond simply replicating the study with a larger and more heterogeneous sample.
- I discuss implications of my study (i.e., how it relates to the real world).
- My final paragraph is a short conclusion (just a few sentences) that sums up the research and its implications.

References

- My references are listed on a separate page with the heading “References” (no quotations).
- I list references in alphabetical order by the author’s last name.
- I do not number the references.
- I use hanging indents if the reference is longer than one line.
- I reference journal articles in the following format:
Rogers, T. B., Kuiper, N. A., & Kirker, W. S. (1977). Self-reference and the encoding of personal information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, 677-688.

N.B. Please consult the Psychology Department’s website (see address listed below in the ‘Other Resources’ Section) for a guide to citing sources in APA format.

Tables

- I type each table on a separate page.
- I mention each table in the text (e.g., As shown in Table 1...).
- I double-space the entire table.
- There are no vertical lines in my table.
- All of the columns in the table have a column heading.
- I use the decimal tab to ensure that my numbers align properly (i.e., vertically aligned by decimal point).
- I label the first table as Table 1, the second table as Table 2, etc. This label is left justified.
- Each table has a title that is italicized. It succinctly describes the content of the table and appears below the table number and directly above the first horizontal line of the table.
- I capitalize all of the words of the title except for words such as *and*, *in*, *but*, etc.
- My tables supplement the information in my paper; they are not redundant presentations of information. I do not present information in a table that also appears in a figure.

N.B. Please consult the Psychology Department's website for help creating tables in APA format.

Figure Captions

- I have a separate page for figure captions that immediately precedes the first figure.
- I center the heading "Figure Captions," or, if there is only one figure, "Figure Caption" at the top of the page (without quotations).
- I do not capitalize any words in the figure caption except the first words and proper nouns.
- I present the figure captions in the following format:

Figure 1. Mean number of errors on a reaction time task as a function of sleep-deprivation condition.

Figures

- Each figure appears on a separate page.
- For graphs, I label the X and Y axes but do not include a figure title.
- I use a sans-serif font such as Helvetica or Arial.
- My figures are large enough that they can be easily read.
- My figures supplement the text of my paper; they do not present information that I have already completely discussed in the body of the paper or in a table.
- Only the figure appears on the page; page numbers, titles, and the word "Figures" are not included.

N.B. Please consult the Psychology Department's website for help creating figures in APA format.

Other Requirements

- I use the active voice verbs (e.g., Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale...) not the passive voice (e.g., The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was administered...).
- I use the past tense (e.g., Fifty-five students participated in the study.).
- I use the word "cause" only if the study was an experiment (Remember: Correlation does not imply causation!).
- I do not write that the study "proves" something; I use words such as "suggests" and "implies" instead.
- I avoid using questions and quotations in my writing.
- I treat the word *data* as plural (e.g., these data are..., the data suggest...).
- All pages except for the figure pages include the short title (which is the first three words of the title) and the page number in a header, right justified.

- ❑ Information is double spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman font (except for text included with the Figures, which is in a sans-serif font).
- ❑ Margins are 1”.
- ❑ I use transitions and topic sentences to clearly link my paragraphs.
- ❑ I use headings and subheadings to help me organize my lab.
- ❑ I arrange the sections of my lab report in the following order:
 Title Page, Abstract, Introduction (title serves as heading), Method, Results, Discussion, References, Tables, Figure Captions, Figures (no heading).

Psychology lab reports should always be written in **APA Style**. If you have questions about writing a lab report for psychology, see *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, or consult the useful resources listed below.

- Helpful page numbers for the *APA Manual (5th Edition)*:
 - **For an annotated sample paper: pages 306-320**
 - Tables: pages 147-176, Figures: pages 176-201
 - References: pages 215-281

Useful Resources

- **Professor Jen Borton’s *Writing an APA Style Research Paper*** (available in the Writing Center and online at <http://www.hamilton.edu/writing/APAresearch.html>)
- **The Psychology Department’s website:**
<http://academics.hamilton.edu/psychology/home/default.html>
 - Includes links to Professor Borton’s handout, information on citing sources in APA format, and instructions for creating tables, figures, and performing statistical tests using SPSS.
- **Former Writing Tutor Allison Krutul’s sample APA Lab, *The Effect of Positive and Negative Priming on Self-Description*** (available in the Writing Center and online at <http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/wc/SampleAPALab.PDF>)
- **Sample APA Graph** (available online at <http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/wc/SampleAPAGraph.PDF>)
- **Purdue University’s *APA Formatting and Style Guide*** (available online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>)
- **Writing Guides from The University of Washington’s Psychology Writing Center** (available online at <http://web.psych.washington.edu/writingcenter/labguides.html>)