

How to write a 1-page report for your lab project

Goal:

You might think that single-spaced one page is too short – you have ~500 words only, and you might think it's too difficult to report everything in 500 words. It turns out that this is what professionals have to do all the time – being able to write about your research concisely is a very important skill. For example, when we submit presentation proposals (called **abstracts** – slightly confusingly, because this is not the same thing as an “abstract” of a paper) to conferences, we usually have to summarize our research in 500 words, no matter how many experiments you've done (it often goes up to 5 experiments). Below is a rough guideline on what kind of information you should include, and how to organize your 1-page report.

Organization/Sections:

Roughly, you should try to have the following sections: **Intro/Goal statement, Experiment/Method, Results and Discussion/conclusion**. In other words, this is really a very condensed version of a full paper – of course you will be omitting a lot of details, but you need to present enough details to your readers such that the readers can understand a) why you did your research (what's interesting about it), b) how you did it, and c) what you found, concluded, and what implications you have for the bigger theoretical questions.

Here are a little more details on each section:

1. Intro/Goal statement

Here, you should present a theoretical/empirical puzzle that motivated your question/hypothesis, state precisely what your question/hypothesis is, what method you're going to use and what you will conclude. This section/paragraph is really the brief summary of your whole report – but it is VERY important to make clear what is interesting about your question/hypothesis and what you conclude in the end in this first paragraph. Make this paragraph catchy – otherwise your reader might have a bad first impression and be bored immediately, which may affect their perception of the rest of your report.

2. Experiment/Method

You should present some details of your experiment, including a) the task you used and why you used it, and b) what kind of manipulations you had (i.e., what are the conditions) and why, together with sample stimuli (you can present one set of stimuli in the next page – this counts as an extra material.). Make sure that your description makes clear why your experimentation can address the question you stated in Section 1. To do this, it is often useful to spell out the prediction of your hypotheses.

3. Results and discussion/conclusion

Here, you should first say a) # of participants and b) the results (for Lab 1, you can just report the average ratings for each condition). Then, discuss whether your hypothesis was supported, and discuss what these results mean to your question, and what kind of theoretical implications your data have.

Other notes:

- You can have a reference list on the next page. In the text, you can have something like e.g., “...Alexopoulou & Keller (2007) argued...”
- Example stimuli can be on the next page. In the text, just say something like “you constructed sentences like (1)”, and then present (1a-d) on the next page.
- Assume that your reader has no knowledge about what you tried to do - read over what you wrote as if you were a potential reader, and then think carefully about whether you made everything clear.
- But you can assume that your reader has the relevant background knowledge – e.g., you don’t have to explain what “islands” or “resumptive pronouns” are, though you do need to explain what theoretical claims people have made about the interaction of these two (because that defines your research goals).