

The Golden Rules of Psychology Papers

1. ALWAYS use APA format for your references section. For papers in upper level courses, you will also be expected to format your entire paper in APA style (headers, footers, headings, title page, etc.).
2. Correlation NEVER equals causation. Ever.
3. General format of a research paper:
 - Introduction: This is where you introduce all relevant research literature. Never introduce something later in the paper; if you want to bring an area of research up in your discussion section, you better mention it here first! This section also includes your hypothesis and why your study is important.
 - Methods: This includes your participants' ethnic, gender, age, etc. background, how you conducted the study, what measures you used, etc.
 - Results: Just give the straight facts – the statistics and other numbers. Do not include phrases such as “as expected”, “in support of the hypothesis” or “surprisingly” etc. in this section. All analysis should be saved for the discussion section.
 - Discussion: Now is when you can talk about what your results actually mean, how this may contribute to the research body of the literature, limitations of your study and suggestions for further studies.
4. For literature reviews, make sure that you're using primary articles (where the authors conducted original research). Meta analyses can be helpful as a starting point, but if you try to sneak them in as a reference the professors will want to know why you did not just look up the articles that the meta analyses looked at.
5. Some professors will outline all of their specific pet peeves for you. If they do, print it off and make sure your paper does not include ANY of them. Trust me, your grade will benefit. Also, if they offer you the opportunity to turn in a rough draft ALWAYS do it even if it means you have to sacrifice some fun time to get it done. It will improve your grade tremendously.

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