

Experimental Psychology - Paper 2

Overview

Write an APA-style proposal for a research experiment. This is similar to a mini-thesis proposal. The paper should include the following sections: Cover page, Abstract, Introduction, Hypotheses (optional), Method, Anticipated Results & Discussion, References, and Appendix. The study must be an actual “experiment,” meaning that there is random assignment to conditions that are manipulated. The experiment should have at least two categorical independent variables, each with at least two conditions (i.e., a minimum of a 2 x 2 design), and at least one continuous dependent variable. The study must be highly feasible, meaning that it must be possible for you to conduct the study in 1-2 months, using readily available research participants (i.e., Tulane students) who can attend a brief lab session (no more than 90 minutes), and avoid pitfalls that could delay IRB approval (e.g., manipulating sleep, alcohol, or food intake, examining reactions to sexual stimuli, etc.). You can work alone or in a pair with someone in your lab section. If completing the Writing Intensive, make sure to review those requirements before starting (e.g., no partners).

Cover Page

- See template and APA Style Manual

Abstract (maximum of 120 words)

- Begin with a general statement about why the domain of research is significant or important. Summarize the introduction of the paper. Briefly describe the proposed sample of participants. Indicate your anticipated findings. Describe why the study is important. Conclude by noting any limitations to the study, or by suggesting the next step for future research.

Introduction (typically 600-800 words)

- Move from general to specific. Begin by describing the importance of this area of research. Why should we care about this research? Next, describe the limitations, weaknesses, or unanswered questions from past research. Then, indicate how this study could help to answer new questions or build on past research. Conclude by describing the specific hypotheses under study.

Hypotheses (optional)

- This section is optional and usually not needed. It can be helpful for students who have a hard time describing their hypotheses naturally in the Introduction, or in situations where the hypotheses are particularly complex.

Method (no word limit)

- Participants. Describe who you will recruit and your expected sample size.
- Procedures. Describe what the experiment entails, including any experimental manipulations used. To get an idea for how this is done, look over the method section of published journal articles. Ideally, a researcher should be able to look at your method section and re-create the experiment
- Measures. Describe any specific measures you plan to use in the study. Cite the measures you will use or make your own, and include all measures in the Appendix.

Anticipated Results & Discussion (typically 300-500 words)

- Include how you would analyze the results (*t*-test, ANOVA, etc.)
- Describe your expected findings.

- Include at least one graph depicting your expected results. You can make the graph using SPSS, Excel, or a similar program.
- Describe the implications of your study, assuming your proposed results hold true. How could this knowledge benefit society, and what follow-up studies would be helpful?
- Describe the implications of your study, assuming your proposed results do not hold true. How could this knowledge benefit society, and what follow-up studies would be helpful?
- Note any methodological limitations of the study, such as potential problems involving validity or reliability.

References (APA style)

- Minimum of 5 references to primary empirical articles (articles that describe methods and results for studies conducted by the authors). Although review articles, books, magazines, and newspapers can be cited, they are not included in the 5-count. Cite appropriately in text.
- Cite a source any time you express an idea that is not your own, unless it is “common knowledge.” Typically, a page number is also included if citing something specific (e.g., figure, statistic, quote) so that the reader can easily go find it. If copying anything directly, also use quotation marks.
- Do not use dictionaries as sources (common knowledge)
- Do not use web sites as sources, without permission from Mike or the lab instructor

Appendix

- Include all of your proposed measures in the Appendix

Late Papers (30% off)

- These can be submitted by e-mail before midnight (email your lab instructor and CC Mike) and will be marked 30% off. Bring a hard copy to Mike at the next scheduled lecture. Late papers will not be accepted after midnight. Backup your work by email and/or flash drive to avoid disasters.

Additional Resources

- The APA style manual provides rules and helpful information related to each of the major sections of the paper, referencing, and tables/figures. In addition to the table of contents (front), the index (back) can be useful for finding specific information in the APA style manual.
- Template, sample papers, and other useful information: http://www.psychmike.com/apa_paper.php
- Scoring criteria are provided on the next two pages, which are modeled after the systems used by scientific journals and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) review process

Plagiarism Reminder

Plagiarism means copying another text without using quotation marks and citing appropriately. Mike recommends using quotes if you copy more than five words in a row, though some consider it plagiarism even if you change a couple words here-and-there. The best advice is to avoid copying anything directly. Skilled writers only incorporate quotes of the truly profound, not ordinary sentences from journal articles. Scientific writing that excessively incorporate quotes is often perceived as lazy, unconvincing, and underdeveloped. Moreover, it is a leading cause of plagiarism because amid all of the copying, it can be easy to miss a few quotation marks. Skilled writers look away from their source momentarily, summarize in their own words, verify that they did not copy directly, and cite appropriately.

PAPER 2 FEEDBACK FORM

Narrative Summary of the Major Strengths and Weaknesses of the Paper:

Fatal Flaws? [check those that apply]

- Plagiarism concerns (copying without using quotation marks and page numbers)
- Major sections are missing or grossly underdeveloped, or nearly impossible to discern what the experiment entails

Major Weaknesses? [check those that apply]

- The study only includes one IV
- The study is in no way an experiment (i.e., no random assignment to any experimental manipulation)
- The study is highly infeasible (e.g., highly controversial, huge sample size, time consuming)
- Measures are not included in the Appendix
- Mainly quotes large blocks of text, but uses quotes (low effort, non-plagiarism)
- No references or gross misunderstanding of referencing
- Disregard for APA style

Moderate Weaknesses? [check those that apply]

- One of the IVs involves random assignment to an experimental manipulation, but the other IV involves a subject variable like gender, race, or personality type
- The DV is a categorical variable
- The study is not impossible but probably infeasible (e.g., likely would take longer than two months, requires more than 90 minutes per participant, involves non-students, or could easily get held up by the IRB)
- Proposed analyses are obviously incorrect
- An Appendix is included, but the measures are underdeveloped or have significant weaknesses
- Figure is missing
- Less than 5 references
- Very sloppy writing, appearance, formatting, or organization
- Multiple sections are very difficult to follow (vague, unclear what is meant, poor logic)
- It would be difficult for a different research team to recreate the experiment, given the information provided (low detail)
- Other:

Minor Weaknesses? [check those that apply]

- The Introduction does not mention a specific theory by name that was used to inform the hypotheses
- There were two IVs but it was unclear why those two were chosen, as opposed to other possibilities
- Proposed analyses have minor problems
- Quotes dull or routine text on more than one occasion, rather than summarizing the ideas using their own words
- Includes at least 5 references, but not at least 5 that were empirical research articles
- At least one section is underdeveloped (either too few words or has substantial length but rambles and repeats)
- At least one section is difficult to follow (vague, unclear what is meant, poor logic)
- An inconsequential but peculiar error in understanding APA-style papers (e.g., Abstract is too long, something “weird” in the Method section, excessive unnecessary information in the Anticipated Results & Discussion)
- Misunderstands an important element of APA style, organization, in-text citations, or referencing
- Multiple sentence fragments
- At least one major technical error in writing, or numerous minor technical errors
- Figure is present but conveys little useful information
- Other:

Negligible Weaknesses? [check those that apply]

- Aspects of the writing could be improved to enhance clarity, flow, or enthusiasm
- Limited “significance” – it is unclear how these ideas would contribute toward understanding how to improve public health or well-being
- Limited “innovation” – it is unclear that these ideas are novel and exciting, rather than simply replicating past studies
- Quotes dull or routine text on at least one occasion
- A few minor and inconsequential APA-style or referencing errors
- A few minor technical errors in writing (e.g., punctuation, grammar, spelling, informality, typos)
- Many of the references were more than 5 years old
- Figure could be improved for clarity or aesthetic appeal
- Other:

PAPER 2 GRADE

NIH Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance	Exp Psyc Score (%)
1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses	95-100
2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses	90-94
3	Excellent	Very strong with only one minor weakness	85-89
4	Very Good	Strong but with several minor weaknesses	80-84
5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness	75-79
6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses	70-74
7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness	60-69
8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses	50-59
9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses or a fatal flaw	0-49

Percentage = _____ %

Grade = _____ / 120.00