

QGWHSS Episode 4: Writing a results section

- N: Hi and welcome back! In the last episode, we saw how to write the methods section in an IMRD text. In this episode, we will focus on learning how to write the next section, the results. Many of the examples will come from this article.
- V: “Words for what? Contrasting university students’ receptive and productive academic vocabulary needs”
- N: To recap, the purpose of this article is to understand the range of academic vocabulary which students need for success at university. Receptive means being able to understand words when reading or listening. Productive means being able to use words when speaking or writing. As with the other parts of an IMRD text, the header for this section may say something other than “Results;” for example, “Findings.” Sometimes the final two sections--results and discussion--are combined into one. We’ve seen that the introduction raises questions. The results section provides the answers. Typically, it presents the research findings in two ways: by describing them verbally, and through tables, figures, illustrations, textual examples and so on. Results are typically expressed in the past tense.
- V: “The resulting list of productive academic vocabulary (PAVL) contained 591 words, considerably fewer than the 3,015 in the AVL.”
- N: However, if the findings relate to things which will continue to be true, the present tense may be used.
- V: “A comparison with the AVL shows that 381 words in the PAVL also appear in the AVL.”
- N: When researchers start a project, they have hypotheses or expectations about what the results could be. The results section addresses these expectations. For example, in this study, the researchers thought that there might be a relationship among certain variables, but there wasn’t.
- V: “No correlation was found between enrollment and student outcomes.”
- N: Words and phrases relating to discovery or learning or understanding are often used as in the following:
- V: “The comparison revealed a subset of 572 items in both inventories.”
- N: Hedging is also common. Hedging means limiting how strongly or confidently you express yourself.
- V: “However, while these factors may play a role in the size of the PAVL . . .”

- N: The word “may” keeps the reader from taking away the wrong impression that this is certain. An efficient way to present data is in figures, tables, illustrations, and so on. If your text includes graphic material like this, there should always be a reference to it in the running text.
- V: “The resulting list of productive academic vocabulary (PAVL) contained 591 words, considerably fewer than the 3,015 in the AVL (see table 2).”
- N: However, don't try to describe all the information in your tables and figures. Highlight the parts that are most closely connected to answering your research questions. So the Results section describes the data the study has produced, in words and with graphics. The Results section doesn't go into what the results mean in detail. That's the job of the next and final section, the discussion, which we'll talk about in the upcoming episode. See you later!