

## QGWS Episode 5: Writing a discussion section

- N: Hello and welcome back! In this episode, we'll see how to write the final section in an IMRD text, the Discussion. Many of the examples will come from this article.
- V: "Epidemiology of race-day distal limb fracture in flat racing Thoroughbreds in Great Britain"
- N: To recap up, the topic is a kind of injury which can occur in racehorses: fractures in the distal limb. The purpose of the study is to find out whether injuries like this happen more often under certain circumstances. As we've seen in other sections, the names of headings may vary. For instance, this section is divided into two parts called "discussion" and "conclusion." We'll treat them as part of a single broader discussion section. The discussion section concludes the article by setting the results in context: now that we know what the study found, what does it mean? So your job in the discussion is to explain the significance of your results, but how you do that depends on the nature of your research, and your topic. Here are some common approaches. One approach is to refer to the research questions, hypotheses, or objectives which were initially presented in the introduction, like this:
- V: "The study reported above set out to investigate the factors associated with race-day distal limb fracture in Thoroughbreds."
- N: Another approach is to highlight the principle findings.
- V: "Racing on an all-weather surface, increasing firmness of going, increasing racing distance, older age and racing intensity were risk factors for race-day distal limb fracture."
- N: These strategies involve referring to previous sections. If you do this, be selective. Don't repeat everything you've already written. Another strategy is to explain how your findings relate to earlier research. One way to do this is to say that your results confirm existing knowledge on the topic, like this:
- V: "These findings are similar to those from previous studies investigating flat racing fatality and fatal third metacarpal fracture."
- N: A second way to do this is to indicate if your findings challenge earlier research.
- V: "This finding is in contrast to that of Smith et al."
- N: The third way to do this is to draw attention to results which are new.
- V: "Novel risk factors were related to trainer and horse performance, and race type."
- N: Another strategy you can use is to suggest explanations for the findings.

- V: “Alternatively, the differing fracture risk between the sexes may be due to differences in bone metabolism as previously identified in 2-year-old colts and fillies.”
- N: Notice how the example says “may,” to indicate that this isn’t definitely the explanation. Language like this often appears when you’re explaining your findings. It’s called hedging, and you can learn more about it in episode 4, on the results section.
- N: Another approach you can use is to identify questions for future research.
- V: “Whilst further research may be beneficial to further elucidate potential pathophysiological mechanisms associated with differences in fracture risk between the sexes, this is a non-modifiable risk factor and as such may be difficult to mitigate.”
- N: Alternatively, you can suggest practical uses for the findings.
- V: “This study has helped to identify ‘at risk’ groups, which will help inform interventions to reduce distal limb fracture occurrence in flat racing horses and enhance horse welfare and safety.”
- N: So to summarize, the Discussion section highlights the significance of the findings. A number of strategies can help with that, and the nature of the research topic and the findings indicate which strategies are most appropriate. If you’d like to see more examples of the language used to do these things, check out the Academic Phrasebank. Bye for now.