

Sample Paper for Learning Research Proposal

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Abstract

Notice that you do not indent the first line of your abstract. The word “Abstract” is centered and capitalized on the first line. Your abstract should be about 150-250 words and should be a condensed version of your proposal. There should be four sections to your abstract. First, start by indicating what the general problem is. The first couple of sentences should explain what the general issue is, as well as the purpose of your research. What is the problem you are attempting to address? Second, briefly explain how you plan to examine the problem (what will you manipulate and what will you measure). Third, indicate what you expect to find (which groups will perform better than others and why). Finally, explain how your study will add to the existing literature. Why is the study important?

Sample Paper for Learning Research Proposal

On page three you begin your introduction. First notice that this section is not labeled, rather it begins with the title of your paper centered on the first few lines. You begin your introduction by introducing the general area of research. Next discuss previous research that is relevant to your research question in order to develop the problem. Provide separate summaries of each of the research articles that you are using as sources for your paper. Keep in mind that you should be attempting to create a logical progression to your introduction. Tell the reader what the general problem is and then lead them through findings that are directly relevant to the research problem you are writing about. Make sure that you have logical transitions from one research summary to the next as you write your introduction.

After summarizing previous research in the area (your sources) try to build a bridge between the previous research findings and the experiment that you are proposing. In other words, it should seem to make sense that you are studying this particular problem based on what you have told the reader so far. State the purpose for doing the present experiment. Don't just say "to test the hypothesis" or "as a class project". Typically you can say something like "As *has been detailed above, previous research has shown that _____ treatment is effective for controlling disruptive students in a classroom environment. What has not been examined is _____.* The current proposal was designed to address this issue."

At the end of the introduction you should briefly indicate the design of your study and state your specific hypothesis/hypotheses. Use specific terms, and make a prediction. Be sure to include your independent and dependent variables in your hypothesis, but don't *label* them as

dependent variables and independent variables. For example, if I were studying the effects of different treatments (independent variable) on unruly behavior (dependent variable) in grade school children I could end my introduction with something like the following: *“An examination of the effect of _____ treatment, _____ treatment, and _____ treatment on classroom behavior is proposed. It is hypothesized that _____ treatment will be more effective than _____ and _____ treatments.” This is because, as discussed above, findings from the animal literature indicate that _____ is a particularly effective method for controlling behavior. It is likely that the effectiveness of this treatment would generalize to the student population that is of interest here.* Notice that I briefly described the general design of my study. Then I made a specific prediction of how the independent variable would affect the dependent variable without labeling them as such. Finally, I indicated why I am making that prediction. I related it back to the literature I reviewed previously.

There are specific ways for you to cite the literature that you present in an introduction. If you were writing about a paper that found that reaction time is slower after alcohol consumption, you could cite the reference in one of two ways. The first way involves the authors of the paper as part of the sentence. For example: Smith, Roberts, and Henderson (1998) found that reaction time is slower after alcohol consumption. Notice that you only use the authors’ last names. Also notice that you use the word “and” to separate the last author from the rest, then the year is placed in parentheses after the last author. The second way to cite a paper involves a citation that is not actually part of the sentence. For example: It has been shown that reaction time is slower after alcohol consumption (Smith, Roberts, & Henderson, 1998). Notice again, that you only use the authors’ last names, however, since the authors’ are not

actually a fundamental part of the sentence the whole citation is placed in parentheses. Also notice that an ampersand “&” is used instead of the word “and”.

If your citation has one or two authors, then each time you cited them you would always list all of the authors. If your reference has 3-5 authors, then the first time you cite that reference you would do it in the fashion described above. However, throughout the rest of the paper you would cite that reference using the “et al.” format. For example: As mentioned earlier Smith et al. (1998) found that reaction time decreased after alcohol consumption. Or, for example: As mentioned earlier it has been shown that reaction times decrease after alcohol consumption (Smith et al., 1998). If you have an article that has six or more authors you should use the “et al.” format the very first time you cite it, and continue to use that format throughout the remainder of the paper.

What if you want to make several citations of the same paper within a paragraph, or within the same train of thought? If you are linking several different ideas together from one article you may need to make several citations of the same authors. In this case, you include the year in your citation the first time you reference them, but after that you just cite the first author followed by et al. The paragraph below is provided as an example.

In a recent review article, Smith, Roberts, and Henderson (1998) examined various physiological changes that can result in humans following alcohol consumption. In one case, Smith et al. found that reaction times were increased following alcohol consumption. They indicated, however that further research might be necessary to examine whether males and females may be more or less affected by alcohol consumption on this measure (Smith et al.).

I have tried to sum up how an introduction is written and the content it should have. Realize that your introduction should be a logical lead-in to the study you are proposing to run. At the end of the introduction you should present your hypothesis (what you expect to happen and why).

Method

The first thing to notice about the method section is that it continues on the line immediately following your introduction. It does not begin on a separate page. The word “Method” is capitalized, centered, and bolded on the line following the Introduction and then you begin writing the methods section. The methods section is divided into three subsections. This introductory paragraph would not exist in a real paper. Rather, the Participants section begins immediately following the Method heading.

Participants

The first section is the participant section. You type the word “Participants” flush on the left margin. Notice that the first letter is capitalized and that it is bolded. In the participants section you describe all of the relevant characteristics of your sample (e.g., number, age, gender, etc.), where the participants will be from (don't give the specific location rather write in general terms; e.g., public University in the Midwestern United States), how the participants will be selected or recruited, and what if any incentives will be given for participation in the study.

Materials/Apparatus

In the materials section you explain what will be used to perform the study. Written instructions and paper and pencil tests would be considered materials. If you propose using

something more complex like a maze, or operant chamber, you would label this section

Apparatus.

Procedure

In the procedure section you must summarize each step in the execution of the study. The reader should be able to read your procedure and then be able to run the same study. You must be very careful in explaining how you plan to run the experiment, so that it is very clear to the reader what you plan to do. I will be looking to see if I understand your procedure enough for me to try to run the experiment.

Proposed Statistical Analysis and Discussion

This section should be brief. I would like you to indicate what statistical test you intend to use to analyze the data and then explain what you expect to find (which groups should do better than which). End your paper by briefly discussing how your study will contribute to the existing literature and society in general.

References

- Bordens, K. S., & Abbott, B. B. (2010). *Research design and methods: A process approach* (8th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Cohen, G. (1975). Hemispheric differences in the effects of cueing. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 1, 366-373.
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- Doe, J. E. (2001). Finding happiness in the study of psychology. In C.N. Clark (Ed.), *The psychology student in world context* (pp. 247-268). New York: Psychology Press.
- Herman, L. M., Kuczas, S. A., & Holder, M. D. (1993). The title of this particular paper. *The Journal that this Paper is in*, 34, 15-45.
- Schmeige, S. J., Broaddus, M. R., Levin, M., & Bryan, A. D. (2009). Randomized trial of group interventions to reduce HIV/STD risk and change theoretical mediators among detained adolescents. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 77, 38-50. doi: 10.1037/a0014513
- Stepanova, E. V., & Strube, M. J. (2009). Making of a face: Role of facial physiognomy, skin tone, and color presentation mode in evaluations of racial typicality. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 149, 66-81. Retrieved from <http://www.heldref.org/pubs/soc/about.html>

Table 1

Mean activity and head rearing scores as a function of injection type

<u>Injection</u>	<u>Mean Activity Score</u>	<u>Mean Head Rearing Score</u>
Saline	22 (5.4)	12 (2.3)
40mg/kg Cocaine	50 (7.2)	41 (4.2)

Note. Standard deviations are presented in parentheses.

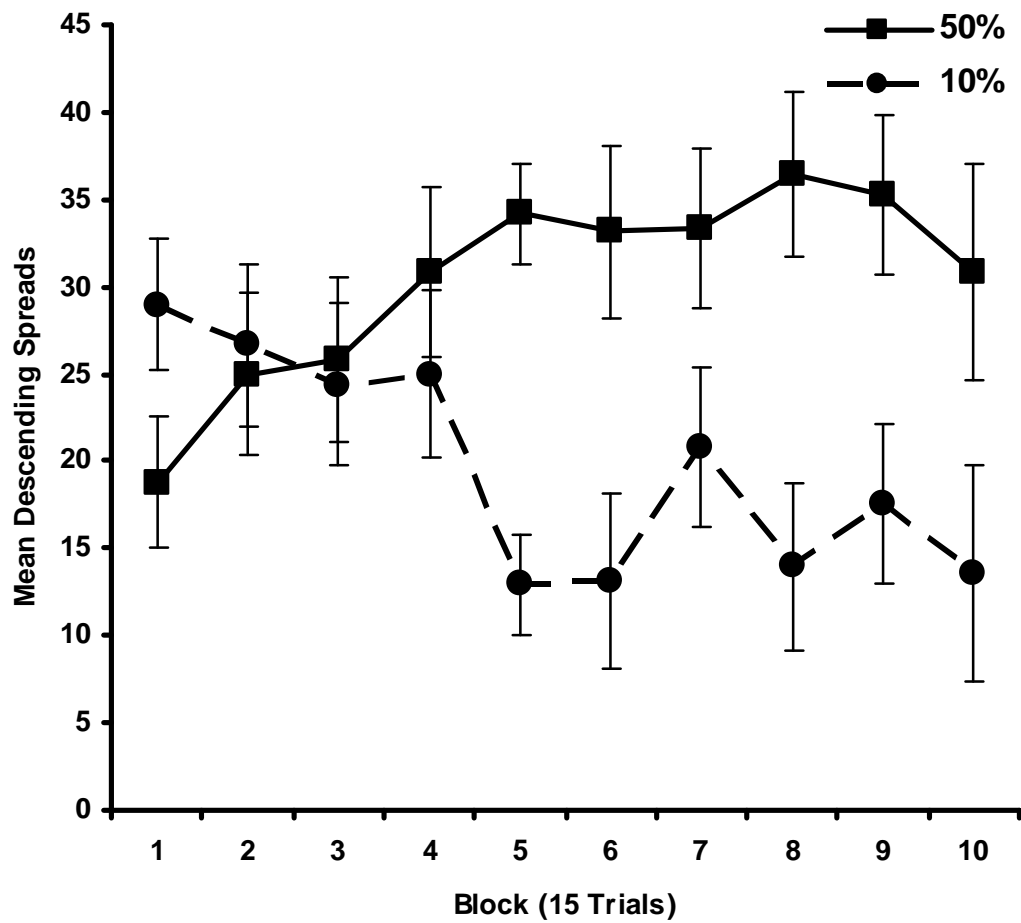


Figure 1. Mean descending spreads as a function of group and block (15 trials). Note- 50% represents the group trained with 50% peak trials, 10% represents the group trained with 10% peak trials. The vertical lines represent standard error of the mean.

The five levels of headings.

Centered, boldface, upper and lower case (1)

This page is intended to give you a feel for the different levels of headings. It would be rare that you would need all five levels, nevertheless here they are. Please note the number in parentheses would not be included.

Flush left, boldface, upper and lower case (2)

This is the second level of heading notice how it stands alone and is not part of the initial paragraph as was the case with level 1.

Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period. (3) Now.

The header actually begins a new paragraph. It does not have its own line. You would now have a section that would describe what ever issue that was indicated by the heading.

Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period. (4)

Same deal with the next two levels. Just slightly different formats.

Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period. (5) Unlikely that you will get to level 5, but here it is in just in case.