



7th Edition

# Discussion Phrases Guide

Papers usually end with a concluding section, often called the “Discussion.” The Discussion is your opportunity to evaluate and interpret the results of your study or paper, draw inferences and conclusions from it, and communicate its contributions to science and/or society. Use the present tense when writing the Discussion section.

- In the Discussion section of a research paper, you should evaluate and interpret the implications of study results with respect to your original hypotheses. It is also where you can discuss your study’s importance, present its strengths and limitations, and propose new directions for future research.
- In other types of papers, such as essays or reaction papers, the Discussion is where to summarize the key points or themes in your paper and reflect on previous statements and their broader connections.

This guide provides possible statements to use when discussing specific types of content in the Discussion section of a research paper. These are examples of only some, but not all, of the phrases that can be used in the Discussion section of all APA Style papers. Check with your instructor for specific guidelines on the content to include in your Discussion section.

## Summarizing your study results

- The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of ...
- The results of the present study support the hypothesis that ...
- The results of this research provide supporting evidence that ...
- There are three key findings of the present research. First ... Second ... Third ...

## Linking findings to previous research

- This pattern of results is consistent with the previous literature ... (citation).
- These results are consistent with the claim that ...
- The present results are consistent with Author et al.’s (year) work that deals with ...
- Whereas past researchers have found ... (citation; citation), the present study has shown ...
- These results represent the first direct demonstration of ...

## Discussing research results

- Our findings highlight ...
- The results strongly imply that ...
- It is interesting that ...
- In my view, the most compelling explanation for the present set of findings is that ...
- This idea is further supported by the finding that ...
- Two other results from this study merit comment. First ... Second ...
- Finally, we obtained evidence that ...
- One interpretation of these findings is that ...
- This finding may be explained by the idea that ...
- Taken together, our findings indicate ...

## Study limitations

- There are at least three potential limitations concerning the results of this study. A first limitation concerns ... A second potential limitation is that ...
- One limitation of this study is that ... It is possible that ... Although the present research cannot rule out these explanations, it seems useful to point out issues that may conflict with these results.
- Although the present results clearly support ..., it is appropriate to recognize several potential limitations.
- Besides our own interpretation of the data, an additional explanation warrants comment. For example, researchers have suggested ... (citation).
- Certain limitations of this study could be addressed in future research. For example ...
- The present study represents a first attempt to address these issues. We feel that further research examining ... may shed light on ...

## Study implications

- Despite these limitations, these results suggest several theoretical and practical implications.
- These data have some potential intervention implications. For example ...

## Directions for future research

- Although these studies support ... , their most important contribution may be that they raise a variety of intriguing questions for future study.
- In terms of future research, it would be useful to extend the current findings by examining ...
- If, as the present study suggests, ... then there is a need for research that explores ...
- Much work remains to be done before a full understanding of the extent of ... is established.
- In addition to those already mentioned, I suggest several avenues of research that may be helpful.

## Closing statement or paragraph

- Despite these limitations, this research can be seen as a first step towards integrating two lines of research, [x and y], that, to our knowledge, have not been directly linked.
- Despite these limitations, the present study has enhanced our understanding of the relationship between [x and y]. We hope that the current research will stimulate further investigation of this important area.
- The present research, therefore, contributes to a growing body of evidence suggesting that ...
- In summary, our research replicates (citation) ... The findings contribute to a growing body of evidence ...
- Although the generality of the current results must be established by future research, the present study has provided clear support for ... Not only was ... Furthermore ...