

ASEAN+3 FETN
Scientific Writing Workshop

LECTURE 6 DISCUSSION

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Objectives

- Focus on organization of a manuscript: **The Discussion section**
- Review and discuss related ‘most common errors’
- Writing Time: expand on your draft manuscript’s **Discussion section**



What goes in the Discussion section?

1. Short summary of the key findings linked back to the objectives of study
2. Supporting evidence for each main finding
3. Discussion of possible causes or consequences of the findings
4. Comparison and contrast with results from other relevant published studies
5. Limitations of the study
6. A summary of conclusion points and recommendations



Formatting the Discussion section

First paragraph

Summary of findings linked to the objectives

- Leave out quantified results

Middle paragraphs

Interpret your

- First result
- Second result
- Possibly a third result



Limitations

Final paragraph

1. Conclusion
2. Recommendation(s)

Middle paragraphs

For each result:

1. This is what we found...re-state your result
2. This is how we interpret it because of:
 - Possible causes/consequences
 - Compare with other studies *Use references*
 - Contrast with other studies *Use references*

Handouts

Tips for writing the Discussion



Errors linked to the Discussion section

- A2 Not referencing statements
- A8 Characterizing an observations as 'the first'
- A9 Errors in reasoning
- B5 Listing interpretations, but not defending one
- B6 Not fully explaining limitations
- B7 Writing generic recommendations
- B8 Presenting new data
- B11 Naïve theories of change

Error B6: Rules for limitations

1. State only the most serious limitations.
2. Explain the limitation, don't just label it.
3. Be as precise about limitations as possible.
4. Discuss how you interpret the data in light of this potential



Language for writing the Discussion

1. Make general, summary statements
 - Overall, in general, largely

2. Show agreement, similarity
 - are consistent with, are similar to

3. Show disagreement, differences
 - In contrast, contrary to, however

Hedging

- **What is it?**
 - The use of intentionally noncommittal or ambiguous statements
- **Why use it?**
 - To reduce the risk of opposition
 - To be conservative
- **When to use it?**
 - Discussion

Hedging Examples

- Verbs
 - Seem, tend, believe, may
- Adjectives
 - Possible, apparent
- Adverbs
 - Likely to be, unlikely to have

Find the hedging language

“In spite of its limitations, the study appears to have a number of strengths.”

“We believe there is no simple explanation.”

“If true, our study contradicts the myth that...”

“Our results suggest that prevalence of influenza...”

Handouts

Developing the Discussion Section

Example of developing the Discussion Section for an outbreak investigation





Writing Time



- Review your draft manuscript's **Discussion section**
- Use the two handouts to guide your work
- Make sure you include only relevant references
- The limitations and then the conclusion are two separate paragraphs
- The conclusion paragraph includes the recommendations