IMRaD Cheat Sheet

Abstract
The abstract follows the IMRaD format and contains roughly
- 1-2 sentences on importance of research (introduction)
- 1-2 sentences on what you did (methods)
- 2-3 sentences on what you found: this is the most important part of the abstract (results)
- 1-2 sentences on the implications of the research (discussion)

Introductions (Why is this research important?)
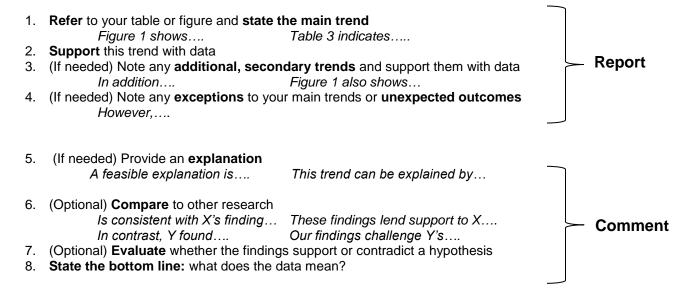Introductions follow four basic moves to introduce the current research project:

(1) They **demonstrate the interest or importance** of the topic.
(2) They **describe the status quo.** This can involve selectively reviewing and summarizing the previously published research literature or it may involve describing current practices.
(3) They show that the status quo is not ideal, **creating a "gap."** This gap may be articulated as an unresolved controversy, a question that has been overlooked, a new application of the research, or a flaw in current practices. In any case, the researchers show that there is something missing (or unfulfilled) in the status quo AND they make the case that there is a need for this gap to be filled.
(4) They present their own work is as a **timely and appropriate "filler" for this gap**.

Methods (What did you do?)
Methods are usually written in past tense and passive voice with lots of headings and subheadings. This is the least-read section of an IMRaD report.

Results (What did you find?)
Results are where the findings and outcomes of the research go. Make sure all tables and figures are labeled and numbered separately. Captions go above tables and beneath figures. When talking about this data, we can think of the results as having two parts: report and comment. The reporting function always appears in the results section while the comment function can go in the discussion section.

1. **Refer** to your table or figure and **state the main trend**
        Figure 1 shows….   *Table 3 indicates…..*
2. **Support** this trend with data
3. (If needed) Note any **additional, secondary trends** and support them with data
        In addition….   *Figure 1 also shows…*
4. (If needed) Note any **exceptions** to your main trends or **unexpected outcomes**
        However,….

Report

5. (If needed) Provide an **explanation**
        A feasible explanation is….   *This trend can be explained by…*

6. (Optional) **Compare** to other research
        Is consistent with X's finding…   *These findings lend support to X….*
        In contrast, Y found….   *Our findings challenge Y's….*
7. (Optional) **Evaluate** whether the findings support or contradict a hypothesis
8. **State the bottom line:** what does the data mean?

Comment

Discussion (What does it mean?)
Discussion sections contain the following moves:
1. They **summarize the main findings** of the study. This allows readers to skip to the beginning of the discussion section and understand the main "news" in the report.
2. They **connect** these findings to other research
3. They **discuss flaws** in the current study.
4. They use these flaws as reasons **to suggest additional, future research.**
5. (Optional) They **state the implications** of their findings for future policy or practice.