

# Writing a scientific report

A scientific report should conform to the following general arrangement:

**Title**

**Abstract**

**Introduction**

**Materials and Methods**

**Results**

**Discussion**

**References**

The **TITLE** should clearly and briefly indicate what the report is about. The title is never a complete sentence, and articles (a, an, the) are usually omitted. Use maximal capitalisation.

The **ABSTRACT** should be no longer than 200 words and should include the main objectives, findings (i.e. results) and the conclusions. A reader should be able to grasp the full scope and significance of the work reported without having to read the entire report.

The **INTRODUCTION** discusses the theoretical background to the investigation and places the present work in context. Relevant references should be cited and the reader's attention moved from the general to the specific. The aims of the present study should be clearly stated at the end of the introduction.

The **MATERIALS AND METHODS** section should include all information required for an exact repetition of the work performed. Since you are reporting on work already done, it is customary to use the PAST PASSIVE tense. Compare the following:

**PAST ACTIVE:** We performed the experiment over three weeks.

**PAST PASSIVE:** The experiment was performed over three weeks.

The **methods** should not be written as instructions to the reader, nor presented as an itemised list. Subheadings may be appropriate. For work conducted in class, a reference to the appropriate practical manual may be enough in this section.

The **RESULTS** consist of data and some comment which draws attention to the most significant aspects of the results. The data are usually presented in tables or graphs, but do not present the data in more than one format. Any comment on the results should be quantitative, not just qualitative; that is, any comments should be backed up with data.

NO      The treatment was more effective.

YES     The treatment was 50% more effective.

