

Writing and scientific literature

Conclusion: how to show the cherry on top

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It may seem unfair, but the conclusion of a scientific article is one of the main items that defines whether it will be integrally read, whether it will stimulate the reader's and future author's reflection and, ultimately, whether it will contribute to make this work be cited. The idealization, study design, data collection, and interpretation of results take considerable time and energy from the researcher to be in the background waiting, as we see on gladiators' movies, that the audience shows up raising its thumb up or down according to the verdict. However, all signs indicate that it happens exactly this way. One of the examples confirming this theory is the evidence that articles with negative or not significant results, from the statistical point of view, always have less probability for publication. In spite of the existence of specialized magazines on studies with negative results (Journal of Negative Results in Biomedicine <http://www.jnrnm.com>), the decision to NOT publishing an article with negative results represents a nightmare for every researcher.

RAMB published a series of articles that attempted to aid the authors by presenting the other side, that of the editors – how they see the articles and how they would like them to be written¹⁻⁶. This article intends to provide some tips on how to write the conclusion of a scientific article, which represents the synthesis of the message the authors intend to convey to the readers. In other words, to say what should be taken home or recorded in your memory after reading the article. The conclusion is that cherry on top, that needs to be displayed in a notorious place with all the brilliance and glamour it deserves. Here are some guidelines:

- Try to elaborate a text that represents the actual conclusion. Be straightforward and do not be wordy!
- Make sure that your conclusion is supported by the study results.
- Do not reach to any conclusion different from the results in your data. Be careful with the inferences, and do not try to extend your results and your conclusion in order to solve all the problems of the world!
- The conclusion is usually singular. You might have concluded other things, but concentrate on the main conclusion; generally speaking, it is the outcome that will make a difference for readers and researchers.
- Make sure that there is an agreement among the title, the selected outcomes in the objectives, in the conclusion of the abstract, as well as in the final conclusion of the article.
- Present your conclusion to some colleagues who did not take part in the study, so they can analyze whether the text is being interpreted the way you intended.

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