

Scientific Writing: a Verb Tense Review

1 Abstract

Past

To talk about actual results.

Present

To talk about general facts, the paper itself or analysis of findings.

2 Introduction

Present

To talk about general background information.

Present Perfect

To talk about previous research.

3 Methods

Past

To talk about what you did.

TIP: passive voice is common.

Present

To explain diagrams/figures.

Ex: Table 1 shows...

PAST

To talk about events that have been completed.

Ex1: We **found** that...

Ex2: Protocol X **was followed**. [Passive voice]

PRESENT PERFECT

To talk about events that started in past but are still ongoing or recently completed.

Ex: Many experiments **have focused** on...

PRESENT

To talk about events that are general fact, discuss current meanings, and suggest future applications.

Ex1: Insulin and glucagon **regulate** blood glucose levels.

Ex2: Increased hormone production **indicates**...

4 Results

Past

To talk about actual results.

Present

To explain diagrams/figures.

Ex: Table 1 shows...

5 Discussion

Present

To interpret and talk about significance of findings.

Past

To briefly summarize findings.

6 Conclusion

Past

To refer to your completed research.

Present

To talk about implications and suggest future research.



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