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
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...

PRESENT PERFECT
To talk about events that started in past but are still ongoing or recently completed.
Ex: Many experiments have focused on...

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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