

# VERB TENSES & ACADEMIC WRITING: OVERVIEW

## Tenses Often Used in Academic Writing:

- **Present simple:** Used for stating general truths, habitual actions, and describing current practices or observations. Verbs often used: "states," "describes," "presents."
- **Past simple:** Used for describing specific actions or events that happened at a particular point in the past. Verbs often used: "conducted," "completed," "found."
- **Present perfect:** Used for actions or states that started in the past and continue to be relevant in the present moment. Verbs often used: "has shown," "have demonstrated," "has highlighted."
- **Future simple:** Used for actions or states that will happen or be necessary in the future based on current findings. Verbs often used: "will explore," "will investigate," "will examine."

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# INTRO: VERB TENSES

## Introduction: A MIX

- **Present simple:**
  - Used to state general truths, facts, or established knowledge.
  - **Example:** "Neuroscience-related knowledge is relevant for a wide range of professions."
  - **Explanation:** Introduces the topic and establishes context or background information.
- **Present perfect:**
  - Used to summarize previous research or findings with current relevance.
  - **Example:** "The shifting of AI research trends has brought new applications of AI in education."
  - **Explanation:** Indicates actions that started in the past and continue to be relevant.
- **Past simple:**
  - Used to describe specific actions, events, or findings that occurred at a particular point in the past.
  - **Example:** "Bidoli et al. (2022) proposed an approach for cardiac monitoring of dogs during assisted education using a wearable, in order to be able to measure the stress level of the dogs."
  - **Explanation:** Reports actions completed in the past, such as literature reviews, specific studies, or previous methodology.

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# METHOD & RESULTS: VERB TENSES

## Methodology: LARGELY PAST

- **Past simple:**
  - Used to describe actions or procedures conducted as part of the study.
  - **Example:** "Participants completed an online survey for course credit."
  - **Explanation:** Describes specific actions (survey completion, participant selection) that occurred in the past.

## Results: LARGELY PAST

- **Past simple:**
  - Used to report specific findings or results of data analysis, or actions taken during data analysis.
  - **Example:** "Individuals who performed best were those working in federal public schools and private schools (88.8% and 87.4%, respectively), and those who performed worst worked in municipal public schools (86.4%) and state public schools (86.5%)."
  - **Explanation:** States results of statistical analyses or experimental outcomes.

\*Sometimes the present tense is used when referring to the entire paper or individual elements of the manuscript (e.g., figures, tables, sections, data): "Figure 1 shows our fluorescence data."

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# DISCUSSION: VERB TENSES

## Discussion: A MIX

- **Present simple:**
  - Used to state conclusions, implications, or interpretations based on the study's findings.
  - **Example:** "In our work, we demonstrate that training on samples from another generative model can induce a distribution shift, which—over time—causes model collapse."
  - **Explanation:** States results and implications of the study's findings.
- **Past simple:**
  - Used to discuss or summarize specific findings or results reported earlier in the paper.
  - **Example:** "Patients with severe functional impairments had important cognitive and emotional deficits."
  - **Explanation:** Reports overall results or outcomes from the study.
- **Future simple:**
  - Used to suggest further research directions or implications based on the study's findings.
  - **Example:** "Future studies should explore the long-term effects of these interventions."
  - **Explanation:** Suggests future actions or research based on current findings.

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## WHAT ABOUT THE ABSTRACT?

Verb tense should be based on the section of the text to which each sentence corresponds.

- Intro sentences: **present tense** when describing the current understanding of the field; present perfect when referencing previous research
- Method and Results sentences: **past tense** when describing the method and results
- Discussion and Conclusion sentences: **past** for a repeat of main findings, **present** for conclusions, **present** for implications, **future** for continuing research

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## ZONING IN ON RESULTS

- Simply state the findings, without bias or interpretation
  - Make sure that the intro has provided enough context for your reader to understand the results
- Avoid providing data that is not critical to answering the research question (supplemental information?)
- Include non-textual elements to further illustrate findings (figures, charts, images)
- Very general organization:
  - Revisit research aim
  - Present main finding(s) with a short explanation (but not interpretation) of your findings
  - Present specific finding(s)

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## RESULTS: TIPS

### Do:

- Emphasize or summarize the important results.
- Refer to the graphics explicitly.
- Describe patterns or trends to notice in the visuals and where they come from.
- Use tables, graphs, and other visual aids are used.
- Include generalizations necessary to interpret the data in the text.
- Create a Table or Figure that can be understood without reading the text.
- Tables and figures should be sequentially numbered.
- Usually capitalize Table/Figure. Ex. Table 2/Figure 6.

### Don't

- Repeat results given in a table or in a figure.
- Completely describe every bit of data.
- Show data that is not necessary to illustrate the experimental point.

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## ZONING IN ON DISCUSSION

- **Purpose:** Interpret and describe the significance of your findings in light of what was already known about the research question/problem & explain any new understanding or fresh insights based on your findings
  - Discuss how findings contribute or fill existing gaps in the field
- Discussion should connect to the Intro by way of research questions or hypotheses you posed and literature you reviewed
  - \*but do not simply repeat the introduction
- Demonstrates your ability to think critically about an issue, pose solutions to problems based on findings, formulate a more profound understanding of the research topic
- Explore underlying meaning of results, possible implications

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## ZONING IN ON DISCUSSION

### Basic organization:

- Reiterate the research problem/question
- State major findings
- Explain meaning of findings and their importance
- Relate findings to previous work
- Consider alternative explanations
- Acknowledge study limitations
- Suggestions for future research

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## DISCUSSION: TIPS

### Do:

- Interpret and explain implications of results
- Relate findings to existing literature
- Discuss limitations and potential biases
- Propose explanations for unexpected results
- Highlight strengths and contributions of your research
- Consider alternative interpretations
- Discuss broader implications

### Don't

- Reiterate every result
- Include statistics
- Introduce new results
- Overstate significance of findings
- Ignore contradictory evidence
- Disregard study's implications for future research

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