

RHRC CONSORTIUM MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLKIT
JOURNAL ARTICLE OUTLINE

Title The title of your article should be precise — brief, but complete. Use correct scientific terminology. Simply describe what kind of study you did, what “effects” you observed (not the findings, but what was looked at.)

Example: *“Perceptions of the Risks of Sexual Activity and Their Consequences among Ugandan Adolescents”* (STUDIES IN FAMILY PLANNING, March 2000)

Authors Scientific articles often have more than one author. Each person who made a major contribution to the article should be named as an author. In a list of authors, the first name is the “lead author” or the “first author.” This is sometimes the most senior person on the project, not necessarily the person who did most of the writing. The lead author is not always the one with whom readers should communicate. Journals usually indicate the “corresponding author” and give contact information for that person.

Abstract This section is a brief summary of your study. You should write this section after writing all the other sections of your article. Be specific and focus on your study’s primary purpose, your most significant result, your most important conclusion.

Abstracts take different forms in different journals. Some journal abstracts use headlines that repeat the section headings of the article; others are written as a narrative paragraph; still other are separated into short one-sentence paragraphs. Journals limit the length of the abstract to a maximum number of words, commonly about 200.

Introduction or Background

The Introduction answers the questions: what?; why?; and how? This is where you give the reader the background on your study and an understanding of the importance of what you did.

First provide your thesis statement — **what** your study intended to do. Then give background that explains **why** it was important to do this study. Describe the characteristics of the population of interest. Pertinent characteristics of the population may include age, sex, exposure to conflict, and duration of displacement, among others. You may also want to give background on the peculiarities of the setting such as history of the conflict and a description of the health services if that is relevant to your topic. Tell the reader why it was important to study this population. What was the question that you were seeking to answer? What was the unknown that your study was designed to reveal?

Move from general issues to the more specific, focusing in on your study’s specific interest, your reasons for pursuing this and, in a phrase, your approach

to exploring the issue. (The specifics of **how** you conducted the study will be explained in the methodology section.

As you proceed through the introduction, mention pertinent literature that describes previous research on the subject. Throughout the text, refer to resources by last name of author and date of publication.

Examples: *Jones (1998) compared student performance ...*
 In a recent study of student performance (Jones, 1998) ...
 In 1998, Jones compared student performance ...

Methods

This section describes the study itself so that another scientist could reproduce it, if he or she had standard knowledge of the procedures used. This may be the easiest part to write. You simply tell the reader the steps in the process of conducting the study. Describe the order that one should plan to follow, rather than errors or irrelevant events. If you followed a previously published method, don't describe it; cite it. Include only details affecting the study's outcome. Be stingy with words, not chatty.

Tell the reader how to repeat your study: Explain the characteristics of the study population, for example, women and men of reproductive age living in six refugee camps in northern Uganda. This will be more concise than all the characteristics mentioned in the Introduction. Also describe the sample, for example, "516 women of reproductive age (15-49 years) and 382 men aged 15-60 years" and explain how the sample was selected.

Explain your study design (use the sections of the study protocol: methods, questionnaire design, sampling plan, field procedures, approvals, etc.)

Describe any limitations encountered in implementing the study.

Explain the procedures followed in analyzing the data.

Results

The Results section contains only results – not what they mean or how you will use them. Data should be shown as numbered Figures (images like graphs or maps) or Tables (information arranged in columns and rows). The Results section should describe your data clearly, and should refer the reader to each relevant Figure or Table.

Start with the obvious (for example, rural and urban distribution of respondents) and move along through your analysis. Cover all your most significant findings and don't include scientifically irrelevant events (e.g., your cousin's malaria or negotiations with logistics staff to obtain fuel). Report the facts. Refer to Tables and Figures in parentheses like this (Figure 1). The Results section reports, without conclusions or discussion, findings concerning the specific effects you said you would study.

Tell the reader what you found, dividing results into sections such as "family planning," "STI/HIV/AIDS," etc., and reporting each type of question in a separate paragraph.

Open each Results paragraph with one general sentence stating the topic of that section. Use words and phrases that clearly specify what your data show, for example, *“Although 86% of women interviewed could name at least one modern contraceptive method, their use of modern contraception was extremely low at 7.4%.”*

Some results include so many numbers that it is better to present some data in table or graph form.

Summarize major concepts in words but, in a summary statement, do not go into great detail by repeating all the numbers. Refer readers to the table or figure, for example, *“Respondents who had attended more years of schooling knew more sources of condoms (Table 3).”*

Discussion The discussion is where you report your conclusions and speculations about what the results mean. Make sure you explain your study’s significance for scientific knowledge of the subject as you summarized it in the Introduction. Your Discussion explains what the results show and interprets what they mean for the question that motivated the study. Open your Discussion by restating the question addressed by your study.

For each topic reported in Results, explain what the findings mean. The points in the discussion should follow the order of your results, and each result should be explained, though some conclusions will account for more than one result and some results may lead to more than one conclusion. Provide a summary of each point and result. Follow with a conclusion that can be drawn from the result.

Use words and phrases like: *“therefore”* and *“this result shows that”* when conclusions follow directly, without interpretation, from the result.

Use phrases like: *“this result suggests that”* and *“this result supports the conclusion that”* when the results are not sufficient in themselves to confirm conclusions. If you found articles in scientific literature that support or contradict your findings, mention their findings here and explain how they affect your conclusions.

In the final paragraph, speculate on how your study may relate to a more general issue. Mention implications for future programming or research, including how your study relates to others' work.

Literature cited

Follow the format of the journal you intend to submit the article to. One standard format to use is from the American Psychological Association, called APA style.

Here are some of their suggestions:

An article in a periodical (e.g., a journal, newspaper, or magazine)

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year, add month and day of publication for daily, weekly, or monthly publications). Title of article. *Title of periodical, volume number, pages.*

NOTE: You need list only the volume number if the periodical uses continuous pagination throughout a particular volume. If each issue begins with page 1, then you should list the issue number as well: *Title of Periodical, Volume number* (Issue number), pages. Note that the issue number is not italicized.

A non-periodical (e.g., book, report, brochure, or audiovisual media)

Author, A. A. (Year of publication). Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle. Location: Publisher.

NOTE: For "Location," you should always list the city, but you should also include the state if the city is unfamiliar or if the city could be confused with one in another state.

Part of a non-periodical (e.g., a book chapter or an article in a collection)

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year of publication). Title of chapter. In A. Editor & B. Editor (Eds.), Title of book (pages of chapter). Location: Publisher.

NOTE: When you list the pages of the chapter or essay in parentheses after the book title, use "pp." before the numbers: (pp. 1-21). This abbreviation, however, does not appear before the page numbers in periodical references.

Basic Forms for Electronic Sources:

Article in an Internet periodical

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. Title of journal, volume number (issue number if available). Retrieved month day, year, from <http://Web address>.

Non-periodical Internet document (e.g., a Web page or report)

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. Retrieved month date, year, from <http://Web address>.