

ScWk 298

Tips for Writing Your Discussion Section

[don't use these subheadings in your paper]

- I. Start with a summary of your study's findings
 - A. Briefly state your research question(s) or hypothesis, and follow that with a brief overview of whether or not your study addressed them. Be general in this approach—don't just repeat what you said in the Results section.
 - B. "The findings of this study confirmed that..." or "We found that..."
- II. How do your findings contribute to the research literature?
 - A. You should refer to one or two important studies in your lit review
 - B. "The findings confirmed what Joe & Schmoe (2009) found in their study of walrus mating behavior..."
- III. Interpret your findings—why did you find what you found (or not)? Use your theory here, if possible
 - A. "The study seemed to contradict the expected finding that..." [Use words like "seemed" or "possibly" or "probably" very sparingly!]
 - B. "The study confirmed the behavioral theory approach of children's response to a group therapy at school site..."
- IV. Strengths and Limitations
 - A. "This study succeeded in providing the perspectives of a previously unstudied population..."
 - B. Limitations (cover the following categories)
 1. Repeat briefly the limitations described in your Methods (design, sampling strategy, data collection, validity, reliability, etc.)
 2. How generalizable are your findings (e.g. other populations; geographic locations; agencies, whatever is relevant to your study)
 3. What were the barriers to doing what you really wanted to do in this study?

Don't forget—your last section of the paper is Implications for Social Work. Here, include the transcultural perspective, as applicable; social work practice; and social work policy. Also include implications for further research, and be specific about that (Improved methods? Different populations? Better sampling? Other questions that need to be addressed?)F

