

Questions to Answer in a Discussion

The purpose of the discussion is to state your interpretations and opinions, explain the implications of your findings, and make suggestions for future research. Its main function is to answer the questions posed in the Introduction, explain how the results support the answers and, how the answers fit in with existing knowledge on the topic.

1. What are the major patterns in the observations?
2. What are the relationships, trends and generalizations among the results?
3. What are the exceptions to these patterns or generalizations?
4. What are the likely causes (mechanisms) underlying these patterns?
5. Is there agreement or disagreement with previous work?
6. Interpret results in terms of background laid out in the introduction. What is the relationship between the present results and the original question?
7. What are the implications of the present results?
8. Multiple hypotheses: There are usually several possible explanations for results. Be careful to consider all of these rather than simply pushing your favourite one. If you can eliminate all but one, that is great, but often that is not possible with the data in hand. In that case, you should give even treatment to the remaining possibilities, and try to indicate ways in which future work may lead to their discrimination.
9. Avoid bandwagons: Avoid jumping to a currently fashionable point of view unless your results really do strongly support them.
10. What are the things we now know or understand that we didn't know or understand before the present work?
11. Include the evidence or line of reasoning supporting each interpretation.
12. What is the significance of the present results? Explain how the results and conclusions of this study are important and how they influence our knowledge or understanding of the problem being examined.

Adapted from: UCT Upper Campus Writing Centre, 2015
Compiled by: Karis Moxley