Results Notes

The following is a list of common errors that I saw in the results sections.

- The tests that you conduct should be motivated by your introduction, specifically hypotheses and predictions that you made at the end of your literature review. You shouldn’t just randomly do statistical tests because you can. Any tests that you do should clearly address the question that you are trying to answer.

- You don’t need a general introduction to your results section, and you don’t need to detail in a narrative format what you did or how hypothesis testing works. You can discuss the general prediction that you made, then describe what you found in your data, along with any relevant statistics (means, t-values, chi-squares, etc.).

- When reporting statistics, use the APA style. The manual has several examples on which you can use to base your own writing. Typically, when reporting p-values, you generally only report whether or not $p < .05$ or $p > .05$. Usually, the only exception to this is when $p$ is very close to .05.

- When you report differences or other significant effects, you should describe your effects. Say which group is larger than which other group. Just saying that “caffeine has a significant effect on test performance” isn’t enough information. Your reader will want to know if she should drink a lot of coffee before an exam or should abstain from it altogether.

- Your figures and tables should include information that supplements and supports the text that you write in your results section. You reader should be able to understand your results based on what you have written, with the table available for additional information (e.g., means). Don’t include any information that isn’t relevant to your data analysis.

- Your figures should not include SPSS output of any sort (unless it’s a graph). SPSS output includes a lot of information that your reader doesn’t need or that you have already reported in the text of your results section. Glean the critical information from your SPSS output and relegate it to the text of your writing or to a custom made table or graph.

- Check the APA manual for information about figure caption pages, and the ordering of tables, figures and captions.