



## TIPS FOR AUTHORS

### *Some Thoughts on Designing Tables*

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A table is a useful device for describing and documenting relationships related to the findings of your study. As you plan the paper that will report your research project, consider whether or not it should include tables. If your data includes more than two or three values in more than one category, your reader will appreciate receiving that information in tabular form rather than in a long string of numbers embedded in a sentence.

Here are a few points to remember as you develop a structure for your tables.

- Construct a clear and descriptive title. The reader should be able to refer back to the table later without needing to reread the text to be clear on what the table reports.
- Most commonly, the rows in a table distinguish experimental groups while the columns report data. Include with the column headings, abbreviations of the units of measure used. Use footnotes below the table to define any abbreviations that may be unfamiliar to your readers.
- Use clear and specific headings. The table should be intelligible to the reader independently of the text. Avoid obscure or invented abbreviations and initialisms. These may have been convenient and completely memorable to you at the lab bench as you planned the research and recorded results, but to your reader they will be a road block to grasping the meaning of your findings.
- Very simple tables prepared as visuals to accompany and support an oral presentation may be inappropriate in a written report. While helpful for an oral report, such tables may be unnecessary in a written one if the information can be presented in two or three uncluttered sentences.

Taking a little extra time to think about your tables with your reader's needs in mind will strengthen your report and help speed it on its way to publication.