So, you've got most or all of your results, and now you have to discuss them, which is why this section is called the Discussion. It is also the most important section of your thesis, because it is where you give meaning to your results. This is probably why many students struggle when it comes to writing their Discussion.

On these pages, you’ll find answers to some of the questions you may have been asking yourself (or your friends, or your supervisor), as well as some examples of Discussion sections from past theses. We’ve also included some suggestions from the experts about how to start writing your discussion.

1) What does your discussion section do?

- Explains what the results mean;
- interprets the data;
- compares it with other research;
- evaluates its importance;
- points out the limitations of your research;
- raises questions for future directions.

2) What information does the reader expect to find?

- How your research relates to your aims;
- how it confirms your aims;
- an explanation of your results;
- how your research relates to theory or previous research;
- the significance of your research;
- limitations or improvements that could be made to your research.

3) What information will you include?
• A summary of the key findings;
• how these relate to your aims;
• confirmation of your aims;
• comparison with theory/previous research;
• explanation of unexpected results;
• significance;
• limitations/future directions.

4) What information will you leave out?

• Anything that is not in the Results section;
• results that are less significant;
• results that do not relate directly to or confirm your aims/hypotheses;
• tables and diagrams (usually: they belong in the Results section).

5) How will you organise your information?

Lots of possible variations here:

• ONE way is to respond to the aims/hypothesis in the order that they are stated in your Introduction.
• ANOTHER way is to start with the most significant results, comment on them and work your way down to the least significant.
• A THIRD way is to follow the pattern outlined in sections 2 or 3 above.

See next: Discussion exercises