Outline for Psychology Research

I. Abstract
Appears first in the paper, but is often written last; should contain key facts from each section of the report; includes the major purpose, result, and contribution of your study; written in active rather than passive voice;

II. Introduction and Literature Review (not labeled in the text)
Writing in this section is often very explicit (Ex: “The purpose of the study was...” or “The specific hypotheses were...”). APA recommends five components:
A. Purpose of the study
B. Scholarly review of literature
C. Theoretical implications (what could be true but has not been studied yet)
D. Definitions of variables
E. Statement of hypotheses and their rationales

III. Method
Describes the actual experiment; has two purposes:
A. Provides details of the sample and procedures so that other researchers can replicate the study exactly
B. Describes method so that it is possible to judge reliability and validity of the experiment

IV. Results
Contains the summary of the findings, including the results of statistical analyses; reports tests of hypotheses in the order in which they were originally presented; does not include any discussion, only results of the experiment.

V. Discussion
Contains three types of material:
A. Inevitable—results are evaluated in terms of the research questions and/or hypotheses generated in the introduction; objective
B. Creative—researcher views the findings of the research to determine what else (in addition to inevitable results) might be interesting about them
C. Confessional—refers to the limitations of the study

VI. References
Lists the works referred to in the paper; should not contain anything not actually used to write the paper. (See recommended APA documentation guide for format.)


2005