

The IMRAD Format: What goes where?  
(IMRAD = Introduction, Methods, Research and Discussion)

Section	Purpose	Verb Tense	Elements
Abstract	Mini-version of the paper	Simple past - refers to work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Principal objectives</li> <li>✓ Methods used</li> <li>✓ Principal results</li> <li>✓ Main conclusions</li> </ul>
Introduction	Provides rationale for the study	Present — refers to established knowledge in the literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Nature and scope of problem</li> <li>✓ Review of relevant literature</li> <li>✓ Your hypothesis</li> <li>✓ Your approach used in this study (&amp; justification for this approach)</li> <li>✓ Principal results</li> <li>✓ Main conclusions</li> </ul>
Methods & Materials	Describes what was done -- experiment, model, or field study	Simple past - refers to work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Description of materials</li> <li>✓ Description of procedure in a logical order, e.g., chronological order or by experiment</li> <li>✓ Sufficient detail so that procedure can be reproduced</li> </ul>
Results	Presents the data, the facts -- what you found, calculated, discovered, observed	Simple past - refers to what was found, observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Your results</li> <li>✓ Your observations during experiments/field work</li> <li>✓ Your observations about the results (e.g., compare and contrast between experiments/model runs)</li> <li>✓ Results of any calculations using the data, like rates or error</li> </ul>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows the relationships among the facts</li> <li>• Puts your results in context of previous research</li> </ul>	Present - emphasis on established knowledge, present results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Trends, relationships, generalizations shown by the results</li> <li>✓ Any exceptions, outlying data (and WHY)</li> <li>✓ How your results agree/disagree with previous studies and WHY</li> </ul>
Conclusions	Summarizes your principal findings	Present - emphasis on what should now be accepted as established knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conclusions should relate back to the introduction, the hypothesis</li> <li>✓ Summary of evidence supporting each conclusion</li> <li>✓ Implications, the significance of your results or any practical applications</li> </ul>

Once your outline is finished, it's simply a matter of turning your ideas into complete sentences.