

Tenses in Papers

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706.015 - Introduction to Scientific Working

Tenses in Papers

What tense to choose in which section?

Background

Tenses in English

- Present
- Past
- Future

Aspects

Additionally, an action might be existing, ongoing/unfinished (to be), completed (has), or both.
e.g., Present test, present continuous, present perfect, present perfect continuous

Motivation

Tenses in papers

- Depend on the **activity**
- Depend on the **sections of the paper**
- Depend on the **discipline**

Motivation

Initial Guideline

- Present tense for statements that are true
- Open vs. closed
 - Activity is ongoing or finished?
 - Past tense for finished activities
 - Present (perfect) for ongoing activities

Motivation

Voice

- Active vs. passive voice
- Examples
 - e.g., We selected the participants [...]
 - e.g., The participants were selected [...]

Initial Guideline

Generally, passive voice is often preferred in scholarly communication.

Interactive Work

- Choose a (high-quality) paper
- Collect the usage of **tenses** and **active vs. passive voice**
 - In the abstract
 - In the introduction
 - In the method section
 - For the results
 - In the discussion
 - In the conclusions

Recommendations

Abstract

- Past tense
- Alternative: present tense
 - More lively and active
 - Impression of recency

Recommendations

Introduction

- Present tense
- Refer to background information
- ... or research gaps
 - that need to be addressed
- Present perfect tense
 - Impression of recency
 - e.g., Little research **has been** carried out to [...]

Recommendations

Method

- Past tense
 - Report what has been done
 - e.g., We **performed** [...]
- Present tense
 - How things work
 - Description of an algorithm

Recommendations

Tables and Figures

- Present tense
 - When refer to illustrations/figures/tables
 - e.g., This figure **shows** the [...]

Recommendations

Results

- Past tense
 - Report the found results
 - e.g., The classifier **achieved** an F1 score of [...]

Recommendations

Discussion

- Past tense
 - Summarise findings
- Present tense
 - For the interpretation of the findings
- e.g., We found that X **achieved** a higher F1 than Y, **suggesting** that X is better suited for Z.

Recommendations

Conclusions

- Combination of tenses
- Past tense
 - Summarise findings
- Future tense
 - For open research questions and future work

Discussion on Active vs. Passive

- Active voice
 - e.g., we assume X. Based on X, we derive Y....
 - vs. (more common)
 - e.g., Based on assumption X, it can be shown that
 - vs. (unnatural)
 - e.g., Based on X, we can show that...

Guideline

"it can be shown that" → paper

"we can show that" → presentation

Literature

- Swales, J. M. & Feak, C. B. (2004). Academic Writing for Graduate Students. (2nd ed.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. (Pages 254-256).

Thank You

For your attention!