

Frequently Asked Questions – PSYC2018 Data Analysis Assignment

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General Issues

How many words/pages should each problem be?

This is the most common question I have received. I am always reticent about answering such questions since they imply the length of your answer is fixed. The truest answer is “as many words as you need that provides a good answer to your research question, includes all the necessary analyses and addresses all the relevant discussion points, as well as does not include unnecessary repetition nor any irrelevant points”. However, no one will be satisfied with this answer, so I am going to offer some ranges that I expect will be about how much I am expecting. Nevertheless, bear in mind that some good assignments may exceed my ranges (although most long assignments tend to include a lot of irrelevant detail or a lot of unnecessary repetition). On the other hand, I expect assignments less than my minimum word lengths will almost lack important details. But there will be exceptions; some short assignments will be excellent.

I expect your Results will be around two pages (maybe between 1.5 and 2.5 pages). In part it depends on whether or not you include a table and graph. The Discussion will be somewhere between one to three pages (250-750 words; although two pages should be enough). The Results will be affected by whether or not you include Table or Figures. The above is more reflective of Results sections without Figures (but including a table). By the way, neither a table nor a figure is absolutely necessary but worth considering (particularly for the more complex analysis) if you think it more clearly shows the Results (or helps you in describing the pattern of results). I expect most of you would benefit by a table or figure (or even both) for the factorial ANOVA. If you decide to include a table or figure, look carefully at the document about formatting tables and figures according to APA style (look above within this module – Assignment Information).

Do we need a cover sheet and what are the formatting requirements?

No, you do not need a cover sheet or a title page for your assignment. Other than reporting statistics and references using APA formatting, you should follow APA guidelines for any graphs and tables you include.

Other than that, use the following broad guidelines for submitting assignments although I won't penalise anyone for not meeting these particular requirements:

- Font size: 12 point font is preferred but we can cope with 11 point font. In the end, we can zoom in or zoom out so this matters less.
- Font type: In general, we prefer Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri. Technically any font will do but fancier fonts are to be avoided. You won't do well if you use WingDings, WebDings, or Arabic1, for example. You probably will end up scoring worse than you might deserve if you use fonts like Blackadder or Jokerman. They might be more fun but they are hard to read.
- Line spacing: In general, double line spacing is recommended but we can cope with 1.5 line spacing (even single line spacing) but we'd prefer double line or 1.5 line spacing.
- Do NOT start Results and Discussion on a new page.
- Have a Reference List but only if you have any references. You do not need references for this assignment.

Should I include the Introduction and Method (from the assignment handout)? How should I format each problem?

No, you should not include the Introduction and Method that has already been provided. Although the assignment is in the style of a research report, I am only interested in you demonstrating that you can write hypotheses as well as Results and Discussion sections of a research report. As such, the following format will suffice for each problem.

Hypotheses

{Write your hypotheses in here; you can use sentences (or subheadings) to separate groups of related hypotheses to make it easier to read and to help distinguish between different questions/relationships.}

Results

{Write your results in here. This includes any tables of figures/graphs you think would be useful. See comment in earlier FAQ. You can also use subheadings if you want although I don't think they are necessary.}

Discussion

{Write your Discussion in here.}

References

{Provide a reference list of any cited articles that you mention in your Discussion. You do not need to cite those references that were included in the Introduction or Method I provided unless you refer to them in your Discussion. Obviously you need to include any that you find yourself that you mention in your Discussion. Given this, some of you may not have a reference list. If you do have a reference list, make sure you follow APA guidelines.}

Appendix

{I doubt you need any appendices. If you think you do, then put that material here. By the way, if you include material in your Appendices that you should have included in one of the earlier sections, you will only get about one half of the marks you would have got by putting them in the correct place. To be honest, I cannot think why anyone needs any Appendices for this assignment}.

How many tables and graphs should I have?

The correct answer is as many as you need. Basically, use graphs and/or tables where it enhances your report. That is, use them when it helps present patterns of data more clearly or when it can help summarise a large amount of statistical data in a more condensed way.

Note that if you include a table and/or graph, then you must refer to it and use it in describing what you found. If you present a table and/or graph and then find you don't talk about it, that's a good reason to NOT include it.

As a rough rule, including a table with two means and standard deviations is rarely ever very helpful. You'd be better having all this in the text. The same applies to a graph. A graph showing two means doesn't provide us with an enhanced understanding (and I think this is even so for 3 means). Essentially, use graphs and figures when it adds something extra. On the other hand, most of you might benefit by plotting an interaction. It should help you understand the nature of the interaction as well as help you describe it accurately to your reader (i.e., marker).

For the assignment, I can envisage a table and/or graph being useful. Finally, make sure you read all the information about formatting tables and graphs if you include any in your assignment.