

Results

The results section usually requires the past tense to detail the results obtained.

Example:

Overall, more than 70% of the granite collected **were** non-radioactive.

NOTE: Present tense may be used in the key/legend for figures, tables, and graphs in the results section.

Examples:

Figure 1 **shows** how (x-axis) effects (y-axis).

Table 1 **shows** the average speed of a monarch butterfly in flight over a length of 10 meters.



Discussion

Present tense is used in the discussion section to explain the significance/implications of the results/findings.

Example:

The removal of vegetation for agricultural purposes **appears** to negatively affect the water quality of streams.

NOTE: The past tense may be used to summarize findings, WITH present tense to interpret results.

Example:

As the number of newly hatched sea turtles present on the beach **appeared** to correspond to high and low tides, it **is** possible that the patterns observed may also **be** the result of a defense



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VERB TENSE IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

What do tenses do?

Verb tenses present a relationship between the present moment (now), and, another moment or period in time (which may be long or short).

These moments or periods may be in the past, present or future.

Tenses manage time by placing them within particular relationships or 'time frameworks'.

What tense should I use?

The answer to this question all depends on the section you are working on within the scientific report.

	Simple	Perfect
	"tensed"	"tensed" have + Past Participle
Present	write/writes walk/walks	has/have written has/have walked
Past	wrote walked	had written had walked
Future	will write will walk	will have written will have walked

Abstract

This usually refers to your results and uses the past tense.

Example:

The experiment **was** successful because the densities **measured were** the correct, known densities of the substances and the unknown substance **was identified** as zinc.

Introduction

The introduction is in the present tense.

Example:

Jumpamine chloride (JCl) **is** a natural waste product of frog muscles.



Methods

In the methods section it is customary to use a form of past tense to describe what you did in your study. Passive voice is often used as well to remove the researcher from the experiment.

Examples:

The experiment **consisted** of two steps **repeated** five times over a three week period.

Past passive: **Three 500 mL samples were taken** at a depth of between 0.1 and 0.5 meters at the down-wind end of each wetland.

Past active: **Each of the groups took** three 500 mL samples at a depth of between 0.1 and 0.5 meters. at the down-wind end of each wetland.