



# INSPIRING ECOLOGY

Teaching Tomorrow's Ecologists

## *WRITING GUIDE*

Word count and structure for virtual hides

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Please see the Writing a Scientific Report Workshop for more detail on how to write the report.

This document is a rough guide, if you want to use different information for your report that is great. This is just to give you an idea of potential word limits for each section. It may make it easier to divide these sections up and tackle the report in 'chunks' rather than attempting to write the full report in a single sitting!

If you follow this guide and use the maximum limits for each word count we provide you will end up with a report approximately 2,350 words long, this does not include in-text references, your reference list and appendix.

Hope this helps and good luck!

Title: Tell us in black and white what your study is about

### **Abstract (200 words)**

- 2 sentences from your introduction
- 2 sentences from your methods
- 2 sentences from your results
- 2 sentences from your discussion

Leave your abstract until last. You will have already written it without even thinking about it!

After reading your abstract I should know the following.

1. What is your paper about?
2. What did you do?
3. What did you find out?
4. Why is that important?

The purpose of the abstract is to act as a summary and also indicate to readers if this is relevant to them or not.

### **Introduction**

Lets think of the hour glass structure – start broad then narrow down.

- Paragraph 1 (**200** words) – The importance of birds globally.
- Paragraph 2 (**200** words) – The importance of Australian birds.
- Paragraph 3 (**200** words) – What is the general view in Australia about feeding wild birds?
- Paragraph 4 (**50-100**) – In your final paragraph make sure you state your null hypothesis and what this study is about exactly.

### **Materials and Methods**

The materials and methods are already complete if you are doing the virtual hides. This should be a set of instructions that would allow someone else to repeat the experiment exactly as you have done.

In the real world, there is no real word limit as all relevant information should be included. For the purposes of your scientific report stick to **300- 350 words**.

### **Results**

In your results section you should explicitly state what it is you found. The mean time for each birds, the standard deviation, the variance and state you F statistic and P-value for the ANOVA. Include any graphs or tables you may have.

Again depending on your results, you may exceed this word limit however I would recommend between **200-300 words**. This is why graphs and tables are a valuable way to save you writing lots of information.

### **Discussion**

- Paragraph 1 (**200 words**) – What did your results tell you? Did you reject or fail to reject your null hypothesis?
- Paragraph 2 (**200 words**) – What does your results mean for birds in Australia more generally?
- Paragraph 3 (**200 words**) – What does your results mean for birds globally?
- Paragraph 4 (**200 words**) – What were the limitations of this study? What would you do differently next time? Can you propose any further studies that may be interested?

### **Reference List**

Your reference list will not affect your word count. Your campus tutors will help you format your references list but it is important you have in-text references throughout the report and follow this up with a full reference at the end.

### **Appendix**

You may wish to include your raw data from Excel here in tables so the tutors can see where you got your information. Again there is no word limit in this section.