

**WHY DO CHICKENS CROSS
THE ROAD?**

This is the title page; it has the basics. Some journals want a second one without the authors= names for blind review. Sometimes they want your address and phone number on this page.

For Submission to the
Journal of Poultry Behavior

Where the report is being submitted.

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and

The authors, with degrees (usually Master=s level and above) and affiliations at the time the work was done. If you have taken a different job in the meantime, you tell the editor so in the cover letter.

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Words: 2,567

Tables: 2

Figures: 1

The shorter the paper, the easier it is to have accepted for publication.

Running Head:
"Chickens Cross the Road"

This may appear at the top or bottom of pages of the printed version.

ABSTRACT

Chickens are often seen crossing the road.

We designed an experiment to find out why chickens cross the road. We hypothesized that chickens cross the road because they enjoy walking on asphalt.

We studied 99 chickens. It turns out that chickens cross the road to get to the other side.

This is important in understanding chicken behavior. Next time we will study ducks.

The abstract is usually limited by the journal to 150-200 words. Shorter is better. View it as an advertisement. It should capture the key results and should be divided into the four basic sections indicated below (often condensed into one or two paragraphs). Some journals specify a particular format for abstracts. *Verb tense: Mixed Present and Past.*

Introduction**Methods****Results****Discussion**

Intro/Methods/Res/Disc. Make this your motto. If there is something that you think belongs in your paper and it does not easily fit into one of these four categories, think again.

INTRODUCTION

Chickens are often seen crossing the road, causing road accidents of all kinds, as people try to avoid the animals or stop to stare at them. Often, traffic jams of huge proportions result from the crossing of the road of a single chicken.

People have wondered for many years why chickens cross the road. Micky Mouse (1) and Walt Disney (2) did a prospective study to try to find out. Many of their ideas were creative, but they were unable to test and draw inference from any coherent hypothesis.

We have designed and conducted a retrospective study of chicken behavior on three continents. The results are surprising.

STOP!!!

The introduction is usually one to two pages long. Again, remember that brevity contributes to clarity. *Verb tenses: Present* (the situation) and *Past* (the review of previous research on the subject).

You probably will repeat portions of the abstract. That is fine. Remember, the abstract is supposed to stand alone as a small photograph of your overall presentation. The other sections of the report are interdependent.

The first sentence should grasp the reader's attention (called the "hook").

Make your literature review very brief (preferably, no more than a paragraph). Be kind to the competition, even if their reports were not outstanding.

Brief statement about what you have done and a statement to indicate that your results are different from those of others.

Do not say any more. In a written presentation, you build toward the results and conclusion, whereas in an oral presentation, you give the most exciting news at the beginning of your presentation and then spend time convincing your audience.

METHODS

Population

There were 99 chickens in our sample (33 each from Tyson, Perdue, and Holly Farms production companies).

Data

We administered an informed-consent, data-generating questionnaire to obtain demographic and behavioral information from each chicken in the study.

Analysis

Results were tabulated for all chickens, summed for the grouped birds, and subjected to stratified analysis using the one-tailed Student's T test.

This is where many sophisticated readers begin to scan your report -- and where they will stop if your work does not seem interesting or valuable. Be clear, explain your study design and thinking, and do not hide anything. If you had a problem, or your study design was weak in some aspect, now is the time to admit it. *Verb tense: Past.*

It is best to divide the Methods section into brief, coherent sections. These sections vary widely, but should include at least the following: Who (what) was studied? How was the study conducted (design)? What analytic methods were used (statistics)? What laboratory (or other methodology) tests were used?

If you designed a very lengthy questionnaire, you may wish to show the contents in an Appendix to your report. Otherwise, you may want to summarize.

Ask your supervisor or mentor (or a biostatistics expert) to review this section of the first few reports you write for publication. It is VERY easy to understand the material yourself but not be able to convey it to anyone else.

RESULTS

The 99 chickens varied in walking speed (Table 1). We found that chickens actually cross the road to get to the other side.

This is especially true in the Eastern and Southern United States (Figure 1).

Table 2 contains the stratified analysis of all chicken subjects by geographic location, age, weight, gender, and color of plumage.

Red chickens tended to wander, rather than following a linear path, so we did not include their data in the analysis. Roosters invariably followed hens, so we grouped their road-crossing data.

Past this point is where you tell the reader what you found. Do not tell him/her everything. Just because you spent time analyzing it does not mean that it must or should be reported. Tell what is interesting, what is significant, and what supports and does not support your hypothesis. *Verb tense: Past.*

Start with a summary of the demographics or other relevant description of your population (if you did not already cover this in Methods). Then move quickly to the primary message, the key finding. Try to divide your findings into brief, logical sections. Do not include unnecessary detail. If you must present a great deal of tabular information, create an Appendix.

Use as many visual aids as possible (graphs, maps, photographs). Readers like them and find them easy to understand -- as long as you keep them clear and logical.

Present a given result only once. If you cover it in a table, do not describe it in the text or in a figure. If the journal editor finds the same material in text and figure, s/he is likely to cut the figure (more expensive to print), and that makes your report less visually appealing.

Tables are any textual material that is reduced to numbers or other symbols and placed in identified rows and columns. Tables are generally much less interesting for the reader than for the author.

DISCUSSION

We found that chickens in the United States cross the road to get to the other side. The study design that we used has been applied in numerous settings (3-7), with entirely successful results. The only aberrant results are for red chickens, who always behaved erratically, and for roosters, who followed the hens without making any conscious decisions about their destinations.

We had some difficulty confirming that the chickens understood all of the survey questions, but we did manage to confirm their answers. Also, McDonald has reported that the chickens in his studies had no problems with queries phrased in Pidgin English (8).

Chickens like to arrive at the other side of the road because they expect to find more and better food there. In fact, Dr. Doolittle reported similar results in his exhaustive study of Australian ducks (9). Although Smith reported that chickens had no basis for their assumption that there was better food on the other side of the road (10), he only inquired whether they knew that there would be walnuts on the other side of the road. It is widely known that chickens only eat walnuts when nothing else is available (11,12).

Knowing why chickens cross the road is valuable in planning strategies to minimize the number and severity of traffic jams and vehicle-related morbidity and mortality associated with this behavior pattern.

Here is your chance to explain the rationale for your study. *Verb tense: Present.* The Discussion section is the least read and most argued about portion of your report. Make it short and sweet, and as clear as possible. Do not hide behind “probably” and “sometimes.” Stand up for your results, and state your belief as to what they mean. The science community will give you its frank opinion as soon as your report has been published.

Summary of your key findings and how you obtained them, what sets your study apart from others, and why people should pay attention to your findings.

State any and all weaknesses of your study up front. Reviewers and readers will do so far less kindly if you do not do so.

Explain what your findings mean. Science does NOT stand by itself except with the inner circle of specialists in the area. Do not assume that showing data is the same thing as providing a report.

Explain the significance for public health, medicine, and the general good of society.

DISCUSSION (continued)

We think this means that we should construct chicken-crossing stations on every public thoroughfare that traverses countryside that is frequented by chickens. The Swedish government has instituted a comparable program for ducks with great success (13). Further studies are needed to confirm the cost-effectiveness of such a strategy.

Some authors end their reports with recommendations. This is what usually leads to disagreement on the part of some readers. *Verb tense: Present.*