IMRAD Cheat Sheet

Abstract
Abstracts can vary in length from one paragraph to several pages, but they follow the IMRaD format and *typically* spend:

- 25% of their space on importance of research (Introduction)
- 25% of their space on what you did (Methods)
- 35% of their space on what you found: this is the most important part of the abstract (Results)
- 15% of their space on the implications of the research (Discussion)

Introduction & Importance (Make a case for your new research)
Begin by explaining to your readers what problem you researched and why the research is necessary. Convince readers that it is important that they continue to read.

Discuss the current state of research in your field, expose a "gap" or problem in the field, and then explain why your present research is a timely and necessary solution to that gap. See Novelty Handout.

Methods (What did you do?)
Methods are usually written in past tense and passive voice with lots of headings and subheadings. This is the least-read section of an IMRaD report.

Results (What did you find?)
Results are where the findings and outcomes of the research go. When talking about this data, we can think of the results as having two parts: report and comment. The reporting function always appears in the results section while the comment function can go in the discussion section. Make sure all tables and figures are labeled and numbered separately. Captions go above tables and beneath figures. (See Example on Page 3)

Report
1. Refer to your table or figure and state the main trend
   Table 3 shows that Spam Filter A correctly filtered more junk emails than Filter B
2. Support this trend with data
   Filter A correctly filtered…   *The average difference is…*
3. (If needed) Note any additional, secondary trends and support them with data
   In addition…   *Figure 1 also shows…*
4. (If needed) Note any exceptions to your main trends or unexpected outcomes
   However…

Comment
5. (If needed) Provide an explanation
   A feasible explanation is….   *This trend can be explained by…*
6. (If needed) Compare to other research
   X is consistent with X's finding…   *In contrast, Y found…*
7. (If needed) Evaluate whether the findings support or contradict a hypothesis
8. State the bottom line: what does the data mean?
   These findings overall suggest…   *These data indicate…*

Discussion (What does it mean?)
Discussion sections contain the following moves:
1. They summarize the main findings of the study. This allows readers to skip to the beginning of the discussion section and understand the main "news" in the report.
2. They connect these findings to other research
3. They discuss flaws in the current study.
4. They use these flaws as reasons to suggest additional, future research.
5. (If needed) They state the implications of their findings for future policy or practice.