Guide for the Written Critique of an Experimental Study

Reference: APA format

Principle: Concise statement of relationship being investigated. May differ from author, especially if you see study related to an area which is not the primary focus of the study. Note that principle is not a hypothesis but the broader idea being tested by the specific hypothesis of the study.

Research Question and/or Hypothesis: What are the research hypothesis being examined.

Design: Diagrammatic representation of the experimental groups. Indicate random assignment or not.

Population and/or Sample: Number of subjects in each group (control and treatment).

Random Sample: Describe the selection method of the sample. Is it random or quasi-experimental?


Factors Jeopardizing Internal Validity: Identify type of factor, but be specific as to probable examples of the factors identified which operate in the study.

Adequacy of Statistical Procedures Used: Identify any inappropriate use of statistics to compare differences. Suggest improvements.

Results: Graphic representation of differences observed. Be concise. Represent only finding relevant to the principle. Principle may not be primary focus of author hence secondary findings may be appropriate for your purposes. Indicate significant differences. A copy of analysis of variable table or chi-square figures are not results.
Briefly Summarize Logic (Inductive and/or Deductive): What line of reasoning is used to tie empirical results to the principle being investigated? Be concise. What assumptions are unstated? Are they reasonable?

Design Improvement: How could the design be modified to more adequately test hypothesis?

Comments: This should be a statement relating study to other studies, citing why you thought it important or interesting, or any other information of use to you as you review summary at a later time.

Extension of the study: What additional studies could be designed to extend the idea? Diagram and summarize very briefly.

Notes:

1. Entire critique should fit on a single sheet - one side.
2. Be concise. Draw pictures. Don't just copy statements. Abbreviate but don't lose meaning.
3. Summarize study for your purposes, not authors'. Principle may be different from authors. Study may test several principles while your interest is in only one. Auxiliary results may be interesting but unnecessary.
4. If you see study as related to principle in an unusual way, not obvious to casual reader, be sure to summarize reasoning in comments.
5. Author's conclusions may be useful but usually are not. Put emphasis in demonstrated differences (empirical relationships) not on author's conclusions.
6. Remember this is a critique. Try to represent exactly the issues of concern.