

The Methods Section (Excluding Statistics)

Principle: Describe the study in detail necessary for somebody else to reproduce it

1. In reality one rarely gives full detail to be concise
2. Still generally the longest section

Potential Format: Follow chronological order of study

1. Study design
 - a. Description of cohorts (time interval, clinical criteria, database search criteria)
 - b. Inclusion/exclusion criteria
 - c. If based on a certain surgery indications for that surgery need to be described
 - d. If Level III or higher try to justify that your comparison/control group is acceptable
2. Power analysis: Level III or higher studies
3. Demographics
4. Treatment details
 - a. Include key surgical details and postoperative care
 - b. If describing a specific technique then addition of good figures encourages others to talk about and try the procedure
5. Acquisition of data
 - a. Every data point should be clearly defined and descriptions/cutoffs referenced if appropriate
 - b. The primary outcome for the study should be defined here or at study design
 - c. Explain any missing data
 - d. Reliability data (inter- and intra-rater reliability) for all measurements unless this is a faculty surgeon measuring something routinely measured in clinical care or a trainee with experience (e.g. previously published on the measurements)
6. Statistics

Tips:

1. After reading a good methods section one should be able to identify sources of bias
2. Flow diagrams for patient cohorts are very helpful