

Writing a Research Paper Video Part 1: Introductions

Video Title: Writing Strong Introductions: Research Papers

Length: 12 min

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the various purposes that introductions serve, particularly in research papers
- Understand the structure of a strong research paper
- Understand and apply the 5 aspects of strong introductions

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Intro Slide:

Welcome! This video is brought to you by the Writing Centre at the UNF Library. Today's topic: Writing Strong Introductions: Research Papers.

Purpose of Introductions

Slide 1:

Have you ever jumped into a reading without sufficient context? Did it leave you feeling confused about or unprepared for the content being presented? This is likely because you were not provided with any introductory information for that content.

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Introductions are provided in a research paper to set the tone for the information that follows. Introductions serve several primary purposes:

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First and foremost, an introduction is meant to engage your reader. Before they start reading, your reader should be interested in the topic or argument being presented; in other words, your introduction should provide a compelling enough presentation of information that your audience wants to continue reading.

Slide 4:

An introduction is also meant to establish some background information about your topic. It gives your audience context for your discussion, setting the stage for the rest of the paper.

Slide 5:

A strong introduction sets expectations for what is to come in the rest of the paper. It works to provide your reader with a preview of the content and the structure of the information that is to follow. You can think of the introduction as a roadmap; it prepares the reader for what's to come, provides navigation through the content, and helps them to understand why the topic is important.

Slide 6:

Importantly, introductions also serve to clearly present your thesis, main argument, or controlling idea. The rest of your paper will go on to elaborate on, analyze, or prove this statement. It is of paramount importance that an introduction clearly articulates the controlling idea being presented in the paper.

Additional Purposes of Introductions in Research Papers

Slide 1:

When you're writing a research paper, introductions have additional, more specific purposes that go beyond the purposes that introductions serve in more general writing.

Slide 2:

In addition to the purposes that more general introductions serve, research paper introductions also provide justification for the research being conducted or presented. An important role that research paper introductions serve is to identify the research problem or gap that the paper is filling. Ask yourself: what specific issue, question, or "gap" in knowledge is the research addressing? The introduction should make clear why the research is necessary or valuable and should address what hasn't been explored in the field.

Slide 3:

The introduction in a research paper also works to provide a brief overview of relevant literature. A strong introduction situates the current research within the broader scholarly conversation. It may also make note of key studies that exist on the topic to demonstrate how the current research builds on or differs from them.

Slide 4:

Finally, research paper introductions help to justify the importance of the information being presented in the paper. It works to explain the significance or relevance of the study and tells the audience why the topic matters in a theoretical, practical, or social context.

Structure of a Strong Research Paper Introduction:

Slide 1:

Having a clear understanding of the purpose of research paper introductions allows you to tailor your introductions to achieve these various purposes. Decide which purposes are most important in the context of your research and ensure that, once your introduction is written, it serves the purposes you set out to serve for your introduction.

Slide 2:

Now we understand why introductions are important in research papers. The next thing to think about is how to structure an introductory paragraph to ensure that your opening ideas are presented in a clear and compelling way. Typically, strong introductory paragraphs will move through five elements: a “hook” or opening statement, context and background information, statement of the problem or gap(s) in research, statement of the purpose or aim of the paper, and presentation of the thesis statement or central claim.

Slide 3:

The first element of a strong introductory paragraph is usually a “hook”. This is an opening statement meant to grab your readers’ attention and get them interested in the topic being discussed. The goal here is to build your readers’ interest; you want your reader to want to keep reading.

Slide 4:

Your hook should be the opening of your introduction; it could be a question, quote, surprising fact or anecdote, or a bold statement. Use your imagination; the type of “hook” you choose will depend on the tone of your document and the discipline you’re writing within.

Slide 5:

Next, your introduction should provide some background information and context for your discussion. It is helpful to introduce your research topic more broadly, then narrow the focus. This part of your introduction may include aspects like the historical or theoretical

background on the topic, definition of key terms used throughout your discussion, or a brief overview of the current state of knowledge on the topic.

Slide 6:

From here, it's helpful to move into a discussion around the problem that your research is aiming to address. This part of your introduction introduces the main problem that the research will discuss and identifies a specific issue, controversy, or research gap that exists in the current literature on the topic.

Slide 7:

This discussion should help to explain and justify why the topic matters or why it requires further exploration. Ask yourself: why should your reader care? Why is the information you're presenting relevant or important to your audience?

Slide 8:

After a discussion of the research problem being addressed in the paper, it may be a natural transition to provide a brief statement of the intended purpose or aims of the paper. This part of your introduction should clearly state what the paper will aim to do (for example, argue a position, answer a question, analyze a problem, etc.). Typically, in research writing, this is often framed as research questions, objectives, or hypotheses.

Slide 9:

The final aspect of your introduction is the presentation of your thesis statement or central claim. The thesis statement in a research paper should be a focused, arguable statement that clearly states the controlling idea of the paper.

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The thesis statement is an incredibly important aspect of the introduction. Crafting a clear, specific, and compelling thesis statement sets the rest of the paper up for success. Everything that follows the presentation of the thesis statement should link back to or connect with the controlling idea in some way or another. Take care to spend sufficient time developing and structuring this statement carefully.

Slide 11:

In research papers, sometimes the thesis statement includes a formal statement of findings, goals, or significance. Be sure to craft your thesis statement based on the needs and direction of your research and don't be afraid to edit the thesis statement as you move through the planning and composition stages of your writing process.

Analysis of an Introductory Paragraph Example:

Slide 1:

Now that we've looked at the structure of a strong research paper introduction, let's take a closer look at it through an example.

Slide 2:

In this example, we open with a "hook": an opening statement that grabs your reader's attention.

Slide 3:

Then, we provide our context or background information on the topic. Here, we're providing some historical background on international exhibitions, indicating to our reader that the essay will elaborate on this topic.

Slide 4:

Next, we provide a statement of the problem that the research aims to address. In this case, the problem is identified as the "othering" of Canadian First Nations people at exhibitions, using examples to show evidence of this problem.

Slide 5:

Then, we state the purpose or aim of the paper: to explore how First Nations culture has been controlled and limited in Canadian history.

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Finally, we present the thesis statement. Remember, the thesis statement should be very clear in presenting the argument and should be interesting and/or compelling enough that your reader looks forward to reading the rest of the paper.

Wrap-Up & Overview of Learnings

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Overall, the effective incorporation of the elements we just discussed works to build the interest of your reader, establish credibility, and clearly prepare the reader for the following content and purpose of the paper.

Slide 2:

While many strong research paper introductory paragraphs do include these structural elements, please remember that the elements you use will vary depending on the purpose or intent of your research paper, the discipline you're writing within, and the audiences you're writing for. This video is meant to act as a guide to help get you started on writing a strong introductory paragraph for your research paper.

Slide 3:

To recap what we've learned in this video, remember that research paper introductions serve several purposes: engaging your reader, establishing background information or context for your discussion, previewing the content that will be presented in the following paragraphs, stating your thesis, providing justification for your research and identifying research gaps, summarizing relevant literature, and emphasizing the relevance of the information and argument presented in the paper.

Slide 4:

Some aspects that strong introductions often have include five key elements: a "hook" or opening statement, context and background information, statement of the problem or gap(s) in research, statement of the purpose or aim of the paper, and presentation of the thesis statement or central claim.

Next: Want to Learn More?

Slide 1:

Now that you understand how to write a strong introductory paragraph and why it matters, you're probably wondering how to write the rest of your research paper. In the next video, we'll cover the different aspects of research papers and what each element should include. We'll also go over organization strategies and argumentation.

Slide 2:

Thank you for watching!

Slide 3:

For more info, check out our Writing a Research Paper Guide by scanning the QR code. You can also book a one-on-one session with a Writing Advisor [here](#). Visit the library website to learn more about the services the Writing Centre offers, or email the Writing Centre for support if you have any additional questions.