

Research Paper Introductions Worksheet

Some professors will tell you that the introduction should be the last thing that you write. Some will tell you that it should be the first. Both strategies probably have merits, but what's most important is keeping in mind the purpose of your introduction. Your introduction should "introduce" your paper, sure, but what does that actually mean? This workshop will cover the goals of an introduction and various framing techniques that you can try, depending on what kind of paper you are writing and how you want to engage your audience.

Goals of a Research Paper Introduction

1. Introduce and contextualize your project
 - Background
 - Relevant definitions
 - Demonstrate importance/centrality
2. Identify the way that your project fits into existing scholarship
 - Insert your project into an existing conversation/argument
 - Construct a gap in that conversation
3. Outline how you will analyze this context and contribute to this conversation
 - Articulate a SAFE (Significant/Argumentative/Focused/Evidence-based) thesis statement
 - Describe how you will support this thesis statement
 - What kinds of evidence/data?
 - How will you analyze/interpret that data?

*Not all introductions will do all of these things in equal measure. Some research papers are better served by introductions that give a lot of background information, while others need to do more work to establish the problem that the paper is looking to solve. Whatever you do, though, it is important to keep your **audience** in mind. Who is your audience for this paper and what do they need in order to understand your research?*

*Based on your understanding of your audience and the list, above,, brainstorm the main **ideas/themes/problems/questions/etc.** that you think need to be at the forefront of your paper:*

Three ways to introduce your work (Hooks)

1. **Narrative Introduction:** Bring your audience into the subject you are studying by giving them an account that is representative of the most pressing themes/ideas/arguments that you will be researching. Your example should both provide an occasion for them to understand “what your project is looking at,” at the same time that it demonstrates why this thing is worth looking at in the first place.

What is a potential narrative hook that you could use to introduce your audience to your project? Are there any interesting social/historical events or figures that are emblematic of the themes that you are interrogating in this project?

2. **CARS (Creating a Research Space) Introduction:** By focusing on the scholarship surrounding your subject, you can orient your readers to the questions that you will be asking and the ways that those questions have been studied. What are the dominant conversations happening with regards to the topic/question you are studying? What is the significance of those conversations?

What are the dominant arguments regarding your topic and question? Why has this argument not been resolved yet (is it a matter of theory, evidence, methodology, etc.)? How do you propose to enter this conversation and contribute?

3. **Problem-Process-Solution Introduction:** If your subject can be linked to a specific social issue/problem, introduce your readers to the problem as it exists in its most significant (and maybe most visible) form. Then, by demonstrating the problem, and articulating your way of analyzing that problem, you can frame your analysis as an attempt to eventually solve that problem—or, perhaps more modestly, offering one way that the problem could be understood and addressed.

What is the broader issue that your work seeks to address? What are the consequences of this problem going unsolved or unstudied? Why hasn't this question/problem been solved yet?