Writing the Introduction

• What problem does your study address?
  – Describe the problem under investigation
  – Summarize relevant background material
  – Provide a review of previous research
  – Introduce concepts and define key terms

• Why is it important?
  – Tell readers why you have chosen this topic.
  – Explain the problem or unanswered questions
  – State what is unique or novel about your study
  – Provide the background: explain how and why your study extends earlier work, investigates an untested population, or applies a new technique.

• How do you propose to address the problem?
  – Outline your research strategy
  – State the research hypotheses
  – Describe your experimental design
  – Explain the advantages of doing it this way

• Build a case for the approach you’ve chosen.
  – Discuss practical implications.
  – Discuss theoretical significance.
  – Develop clear links between past research and the present study, and between your research question and research design.
  – In your review of the literature, select previous studies that relate directly to your study.
Introduction

• Develop the theoretical background
  – Describe candidate theories or models
  – Outline key differences between models
  – Formulate predictions and provide their rationale

Writing the Introduction

• Review the literature.
  – Start out with broad, general considerations, define your terms and gradually become more specific.
  – Review the relevant literature. No need to include every study on the subject.
  – Make the connection to the present study.

Writing the literature review

• The literature review for a research paper is selective: it provides all and only the information the reader needs to know to explain why you are doing the study, what is already known and what questions remain.

The Introduction section

• Purpose of a directed literature review
  – Does it cover too much or too little?
  – Are the citations relevant to the topic?
  – Have you left out any important citations?
  – Are the arguments presented clearly and systematically?
  – Does it provide the needed justification for your experiment?

The Introduction section

• Describe the research hypothesis
  – Formulate the research question
  – Describe how you plan to test it
  – Justify your approach
  – Provide general outline of your experiment

Some examples


Writing the literature review

• Explain what is unique about your study: the aspect that sets it apart from previous published studies.
• Explain how your approach differs from earlier studies, and why this new approach is important.

Literature Review

• Step 1: Write an outline. Start with a general statement of what is already known, then focus on what is not well understood. This may be a controversy, a gap in the literature, or an unanswered question.

Literature Review

• Step 2: Introduce your research question. Set this up so that readers are left with the impression that your research topic is the most interesting and logical question to ask.

Draft version of the Introduction

• Step 3: Write a draft of the Introduction. You will need to re-write it several times as you develop your ideas and learn more about the topic. (You do not need to analyze the results before starting on this).

Draft version of the paper

• Step 4: Write the remaining sections of the paper in a quick first draft. Fill in details later: add new material later to make things clearer, or provide additional background material, and delete phrases or sentences that do not directly relate to the central theme.

Writing the literature review

• Each sentence in your Introduction should start with a topic sentence making an important point.
• Arrange the sentences in each paragraph in order of importance, with the most important points first.
Writing the literature review

• End your Introduction with a compelling **rationale** for your study. This should convince the reader that your study provides important new evidence, and that its topic is the logical next thing to investigate.

Writing the literature review

• Generally you should follow the writing style used by the papers in the field you are studying.
• If you use technical terms, define them the first time you use them.

Writing the literature review

• Write multiple drafts and proofread them (read them aloud). Eliminate wordy passages, unclear sentences, sentence fragments. Avoid repetition.
• Make sure each paragraph has a clear transition to the next paragraph.

Writing the literature review

• Provide a reference for each substantive finding or theoretical statement that is not your own.
• If you do not provide a reference, readers will assume that you (as the author) take credit for the concept or finding.

Writing the literature review

• Only cite references you have actually read.
• Only cite references with direct relevance to your paper.
• Follow the procedure for references in the APA manual.
Due March 18

Group assignment / Homework

1. What is the research hypothesis?
2. What is/are the dependent variable(s)?
3. What are the independent variables?
4. Summarize the results in your own words. 
   What answers do they provide concerning the research hypothesis? 
5. Graph the findings (use hypothetical data). 
6. Do you see any problems with this study or future directions that could be addressed?