

How to Write an Introduction

Where does it fit? – The introduction follows the abstract or if there is no abstract is the first section of a document. The introduction may contain several elements including an introduction to the topic, a literature review, a statement of objectives, and in some cases technical theory. These elements may be broken out into separate sections or lumped together.

Before Writing – Consider your audience and what you need to say to place your main topic in context with the reader. Typically the introduction starts with a broad topic, question, or need and narrows the topic down to the specific issue to be addressed in the document. Attempt to capture the reader's interest by showing relevance to societal issues or common problems. Avoid references to assignments or requirements.

Carefully consider each of the following issues before writing the introduction.

- **Global** – What global, national or local problem or interest is being addressed by the topic in the document? (for example Energy)
- **General** – What general approach has been used and will be used to solve the problem. (for example Wind Turbines)
- **Specific** – What specific problem is being addresses and how is it being addressed? (for example: Aerodynamic Modeling of Wind Turbine Blades)
- **Past Work** – What work has been done in the past to solve this problem. What was the approach and what was the result
- **Contribution** – What insights or contributions will be provided in this document.

While Writing – Use the information you have obtained to generate interest and value for the content of the document. Make the information relevant.

- **Funnel** – Think of a funnel with the first sentence covering a large general topic with the last sentence stating the specific contribution or objective of the document.
- **References** – Don't forget to cite authorities when building a case for the importance of the problem and the individuals that have made contributions.

After Writing – Consider whether or not the introduction makes demonstrates the value of the work being presented. Is the work related to a problem that almost everyone can relate to. Is there relevance.

- **Sections** – If the topic introduction, literature review, and objective statement become too long, consider making separate sections for each topic.

Easy reading is damn hard writing. But if it's right, it's easy. It's the other way round, too. If it's slovenly written, then it's hard to read. It doesn't give the reader what the careful writer can give the reader.

— Maya Angelou