

**What is the goal of an introduction, and when should I start writing it?**

A good introduction can win your readers' attention, convince them that your area of research is important, and prepare them for the research that will come in later sections. In their book on graduate-level research papers, Swales and Feak (2004) explain that the introduction creates a research space for the author's own work.

Because introductions reflect the and elude to the rest of the paper, you should consider writing the introduction after the rest of the paper has been completed. Research questions and findings are bound to evolve as you work through them, so an introduction written before the rest of the paper may not represent the finished product.

**How should I organize my introduction?**

Swales and Feak (2004) present a model to create a research space. This model includes several "moves," the key steps you should take to establish your research within the field.

*Move 1: Cover the Background Information.* The first paragraphs of your paper explore the field. The level of depth needed will depend on who you are writing for (see our writing guide on "Appropriateness and Audience"). Make note of the earlier research you are building on, and explain why the field is important, interesting, problematic, or controversial.

*Move 2: Find a Research Gap.* Once you have established a research background, describe the areas where experts still have questions. In specific, describe the question your research seeks to answer. You might write, "While researchers have studied..., they have not yet examined..." or "Although this theory is promising, it has not yet been extensively tested."

*Move 3: Fill the Research Gap.* Now that you've raised a question, explain how your research will answer it. Explain your thesis, the central argument or objective of your research. You might also state your research questions or hypotheses, discuss your findings, or map out the paper's structure.

**How does my conclusion relate to my introduction?**

Conclusions mirror introductions. An introduction will begin by exploring the field, then discuss a research gap and how the present paper seeks to answer it. A conclusion, on the other hand, begin by discussing your findings, then discussing how they answer the research question, and finally connecting back to the broader world of research.