



Learning with Purpose

How to Write an Introduction

Writing the First Paragraph of an Introduction

Steps in this tutorial

- 1) State the goals of this tutorial
- 2) What is an introduction
- 3) How to write an introduction
- 4) Outline of an introduction
- 5) The opening paragraph of an introduction
- 6) Detailed outline of the opening paragraph

Goal

- To explain what an introduction is
- To outline the basic parts of an introduction
- To present one format you can use to write an introduction
- To show you how to write a very first paragraph for an introduction

Objectives

- By the end of this tutorial you should be able to
 - Articulate what an introduction is
 - Know the general parts of an introduction
 - Know why the first paragraph is important, and how it guides the rest of the introduction
 - Draft a first paragraph for your introduction

What is an Introduction?

- An introduction may be many different things, depending on the type of writing you are doing
- In an empirical paper—a proposal or research paper—an introduction does three things:
 - Introduces your topic
 - Reviews the literature of your topic
 - States your hypotheses or research questions

What is an Introduction?

- Students often ask: What is the difference between an introduction and a literature review?
- Answer: The literature review is part of your introduction
 - It is likely to be the largest, most important part

How do you write an introduction?

- Introductions to research papers in psychology have many formats
- In this tutorial you will learn one format
- As you go on in research writing, you may modify, change, or completely ignore this format
- Or, your instructor may ask you to use a different format
- The purpose of presenting this one format is to give you a general starting point

The Outline of an Introduction

Here is a very broad outline. The slides that follow show how to write the opening paragraph. The other sections are covered in a different tutorial

- I. Opening paragraph
- II. Review of the literature
- III. Summary paragraph and statement of hypotheses or research questions

The Opening Paragraph

- This is a key paragraph
- It lets the reader know what to expect
- It gives the reader a general roadmap for your paper
- It may mention papers you will review in more detail later
- For a very long paper it may be more than one paragraph

The opening paragraph

Includes 5 basic pieces of information, usually in this order:

- A statement of the general topic
- A general statement about what the literature has found
- A statement about what the literature is missing or where there is an unanswered question
- The aim of the study
- A general statement of the study approach

The opening paragraph-Example

- For a study about child development, parenting and culture
Parenting style is a well established influence on child development (Bornstein, 2003). Research indicates that different parenting styles are generally predictive of academic and emotional adaptation in children (Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989) . However, some research has suggested that the influence of parenting style may vary across cultures and by immigration status (Frankel & Roer-Bornstein, 1982). The aim of the current study was to examine how parenting style among first-generation immigrants from the African diaspora influenced child development. The study examined parenting style and child outcomes within a community of Somalian immigrants in the Northeastern United States.

Opening paragraph-First Sentence

- A statement of the general topic:

Parenting style is a well established influence on child development (Bornstein, 2003).

- Note
 - The statement is general, but not too general
 - it is not a sweeping statement
 - The statement is empirical—it is a statement of research findings
 - Not an opinion
 - The statement includes a citation
 - This citation may be reviewed in more detail later in the paper

Opening paragraph-Second Sentence

- A statement about what the literature has found
Research indicates that different parenting styles are generally predictive of academic and emotional adaptation in children (Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989) .
- This is more specific than your first statement
- It introduces the reader to the specific area you are interested in
 - Parenting style and academic and emotional outcomes in children
- It includes a citation
 - Which you will review in more detail later in the introduction

Opening Paragraph-Third Sentence

- A statement about what the literature is missing or where there is an unanswered question

However, some research has suggested that the influence of parenting style may vary across cultures and by immigration status (Frankel & Roer-Bornstein, 1982).

- Note
 - This statement is a contrast with the previous statement
 - It says not all parenting styles lead to the same outcome
 - It introduces the idea that there is a an unanswered question to be explored
 - It includes a citation
 - Which will be reviewed in more detail later in the paper

Opening Paragraph-Fourth Sentence

- The aim of the study

The aim of the current study was to examine how parenting style among first-generation immigrants from the African diaspora influenced child development.

- This tells the reader generally what your study is about
- It should be a study that responds to the question you identified in the previous sentence
- Because the study is completed, it is a statement in the past tense
 - For a proposal the statement would be in the future tense

Opening Paragraph-Fifth Sentence

- A general statement of the study approach

The study examined parenting style and child outcomes within a community of Somalian immigrants in the Northeastern United States.

- This tells the reader just a little about your sample and method
 - Not too much
 - Enough so that the reader understands why you review certain types of articles

Summary

- This tutorial presented the definition and purpose of an introduction for an empirical paper or proposal
- It presented one format for writing an introduction
- It focused on writing the very first paragraph of an introduction
- It gave a detailed step by step account of how to write the first paragraph of an introduction