

Technical Writing and Speaking in English

Class 6: Writing an introduction

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- Questions answered by the introduction:
 - What exactly is the work? (scientific context)
 - Why is the work important? (motivation)
 - What has already been done before? (related work)
 - What is needed to understand the work? (preliminaries)
 - How will the work be presented? (overview of the paper)

What exactly is the work? (scientific context)

1) *Zooming in*

- start by a reasonably broad perspective and gradually tend towards your specific subject
- can be a good choice if the readers are not that familiar with the subject
- a good way to start motivating your work as you zoom in

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2) *Zooming out*

- you start by directly explaining your work (without too much detail) and you gradually put it into a bigger context
- can be a good choice when you have a standalone work, which can be understood without much context
- a good way to start mentioning related works as you zoom out

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- explain even seemingly obvious motivations (for others it might not be obvious)

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 - We finish by positioning our work among the gaps shown

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- The key question: How much background information the introduction should provide?
 - The less your audience knows, the harder it is to write the background section
 - Teacher's tip: do not overestimate the audience's knowledge
- This can be separated from the introduction. In a section called, for instance, "Preliminary Concepts". This section can go right after the introduction.
- The size varies in function of how much the readers are expected to know and the type of document

How will the work be presented? (overview of the paper)

- it is customary to include a paragraph at the end of the introduction that explains the layout of the paper
- the paragraph should not be too long
- it's a dense table of contents part with one sentence explanations