

Writing the Introduction, Abstract, and Conclusion (and Title) to a Research Paper

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Project proposal discussion

- PDF proposal slides due Tuesday, Apr. 3, 11:59pm
- Upload slides to your proposal folder in your personal GitHub repository.
- Post a link to your repository as a comment in [Issue #1](#) in the issue in the course repo.
- Proposal presentations in class on Wednesday.
- You will be divided into two groups
- You will have 5 minutes, 10 slides, 30 sec per slide
- Will answer questions
- Will manage your time
- Worth 10 points (1/16 of grade)

Different levels of presentation

- Basic interview, networking skills
- Should be prepared with 5 levels of discussion about research
 - 2-sentence description: Research question and summary result
 - Elevator pitch: abstract length description of research
 - 5-minute proposal: research question, context, methods, result
 - 20-minute conference presentation: summary of all parts of paper
 - 1.0-1.5 hour presentation: in depth presentation of all parts of paper

Different levels of presentation

- This is how you talk to someone about research
 - Start at the smallest description
 - Work your way towards more detailed description
 - Quit when notice they have lost interest
- This is important when you talk to potential advisors
 - What do you have that is valuable to them?
 - Remember value of replicating their work

Remember

You have to market and sell your value

Pools of papers

Papers

- *American Economic Review* current issue
 - *American Political Science Review* current issue
 - *Annual Review of Sociology* current issue
 - NBER, This Week's Working Papers
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- This is a misplaced lecture. It should come at the end
 - Conclusion, introduction, abstract should be last steps (in that order) of a paper

Steps to research paper

1 Hone research question

- Can make title at this point
 - Title should not be cute (unless absolutely irresistible or unless senior researcher)
 - Title should not be too long
 - Title should refer to research question, tell what paper is about
 - Title might even be research question (with question mark)

2 Then work on body of paper

3 Lastly, write:

- Conclusion
- Introduction
- Abstract

Conclusion

- Conclusion is the first thing you should write after finishing the body of the paper.
- Should be fairly short (3-to-8 paragraphs)
- Briefly summarize key results and takeaways
- Reiterate limitations of results or analyses (where bodies are buried)
- Can talk a little bit about extensions and future work
- Most readers don't make it to the conclusion

Writing the introduction

Key point

- This is the hardest section of paper to write well
 - Faculty find difficult to delegate this section to student coauthors
 - Most important to how broadly paper will influence
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- Think of introduction as executive summary
 - Introduction is the most read section of the paper

Intro is marketing center of paper

- What is research question?
- Why is it important? Why should anyone care?
- How do you answer the question? Data, theory, methods, experiments
- Summarize results
- Literature: What do you add to what has already been done? Put paper in context, **NOT MORE**
- Optional: paragraph describing the structure (outline) of the paper

Where should research question appear?

State the research question prominently and clearly somewhere in the first two paragraphs

Aside on marketing

- GitHub account (e.g., <https://github.com/rickecon>)
- Maintain professional website (e.g., <https://sites.google.com/site/rickecon/>)
- Professional Twitter (Personal?)
- Blog posts, policy papers, opinion pieces
- Present at conferences
- Build a network

Writing the abstract

- This is the last thing you write (bow on paper)
- Contains 3 pieces:
 - Research question
 - Reference to methods (maybe data, maybe not data)
 - Results summary
- Does not usually contain citations unless central to question
- Should be between 5 and 10 sentences