Introductions and Conclusions: Overview

- The Three Elements of an Introduction:
  - Context + Problem + Response
  - Establishing Common Ground
  - Stable Contexts and Disrupting Problems
- Stating the Problem:
  - When Should You State Conditions Explicitly?
  - When Should You Spell Out Costs and Benefits?
  - Testing Conditions and Costs
- Stating the Response:
  - State the Goal of Your Solution
  - Promise a Solution
  - Fast or Slow?
- Organizing the Whole Introduction
- Conclusions:
  - Start with Your Main Point
  - Add a New Significance or Application
  - Add a Call for More Research
The 3 Elements of an Introduction

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<th>Context + Problem + Response</th>
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<td>Contextualizing background</td>
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1. **OPENING CONTEXT:** Why can't a machine be more like a man? . . . The same question has been raised by and about creatures ranging from Frankenstein to Terminator II.

**PROBLEM:** But the real question is . . . do they tacitly reinforce destructive stereotypes of what it is about a person that we must think of as "normal"?

**RESPONSE:** The model person, to which we all must aspire, seems in fact to be defined by Western criteria that exclude most of the people in the world.

2. **OPENING CONTEXT:** As part of its program of Continuous Quality Improvement ("CQI"). Motodyne Computers plans to redesign the user interface. . . . Motodyne has three years' experience with its current icon set.

**PROBLEM:** but it has no data showing which icons are self-explanatory. Lacking such data, we cannot determine which icons to retain and which to redesign.

**RESPONSE:** This report provides data for eleven icons, showing that five of them are not self-explanatory.

3. **OPENING CONTEXT:** In today's society, would Major John André . . . be hanged [for spying]? . . . It is the only offense for which death is mandated.

**PROBLEM:** Recently, though, the Supreme Court has rejected mandatory death sentences in civilian cases, creating an ambiguity in their application to military cases . . . Congress may have to revise the Universal Code of Military Justice.

**RESPONSE:** This article concludes that to be the case.

Establishing Common Ground

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**STABLE CONTEXT:** One sunny morning, Little Red Riding Hood was skipping happily through the forest on her way to Grandmother's house. . . .

**DISRUPTING PROBLEM:** . . . When suddenly Hungry Wolf jumped out from behind a tree, frightening her.

**For research:**

Open with the stable context of a common ground—some apparently unproblematic account of research, a statement of the community's consensus on a familiar topic.

**Disrupts it with a problem:** Reader, you think you know something, but your knowledge is flawed or incomplete.

**Strategies:**

For known problems: You may heighten its rhetorical punch by introducing it with an unproblematical context of prior research, not just to orient readers toward the topic:

Common ground can describe a general misunderstanding

Survey current but perhaps flawed research

Point to a misunderstanding about the problem itself
### Stating The Problem

Two parts (from chapter 4):

- Some condition of incomplete knowledge or understanding, and
- the consequences of not fully knowing or understanding

#### When Should You State Conditions Explicitly?

Sometimes the problem condition is known, and you can mention the problem implicitly (e.g., “We present a model for X” — knowing that the community knows the need for it)

When the problem condition is not common knowledge, state it explicitly

#### When Should You Spell Out Costs and Benefits?

Applied research typically have an explicit cost of non-solution or a benefit of solution

Basic research the cost is flawed knowledge, and the benefit is better understanding

#### Testing Conditions and Costs

Answer the dreaded “so what question” — question of significance

### Stating the Response

#### State the Gist of Your Solution

You are writing a research paper/proposal, not a suspense novel

You need a statement of the gist of your solution or the point of your paper in the introduction

#### Promise a Solution

Weak approach — just announce your topic

You need to preview your result: “In this paper, we will show…”
Fast or Slow?

Fast if you are writing to knowledgeable peers:

Fluid-film forces in squeeze-film dampers (SFDs) are usually obtained from the Reynolds equation of classical lubrication theory. However, the increasing size of rotation machinery requires the inclusion of fluid inertia effects in the design of SFDs.

Slow if you are writing to audience without background knowledge:

A method of protecting migrating fish at hydroelectric power developments is diversion by screening turbine intakes . . . [another 110 words explaining screens]. Since the efficiency of screens is determined by the interaction of fish behavior and hydraulic flow, screen design can be evaluated by determining its hydraulic performance . . . [40 more words explaining hydraulics]. This study resulted in a better understanding of the hydraulic features of this technique, which may guide future designs.

Organizing the Whole

Introduction

Common Ground + Problem + Response

If the problem is well known, omit the common ground; begin with the condition of the problem.

If the consequences of the problem are very well known, you can also omit them.

If you want to show how you worked through the problem and solved it, state your main point in the conclusion; at the end of your introduction, frame your response as launching point.
Conclusions

Start with Your Main Point

If you end your introduction with your main point, state it again at the beginning of your conclusion, but state it more fully. It should not simply repeat your introduction.

If you end your introduction not with your main point but with a launching point, state your point at the beginning of your conclusion, and be sure to use the key terms you used at the end of your introduction.

Add a New Significance or Application

Paraphrase your significance argument

Possibly add a new significance

Be careful not to broaden the significance that makes it a new main point or that supersedes the main point.

Add a Call for More Research

It is typical to give pointers for where the research can go beyond the paper.