

ECO 307: Introductory Econometrics

Writing Your Introduction

Instructor: James Murray

Due by Monday, December 7 at 11:59pm

Purpose: The introduction is the first section of your final paper project. The purpose of your introduction is threefold:

1. Introduce your readers to the purpose of your paper.
2. Put your contribution in context. Describe relevant background information to help your readers understand and appreciate the issues that you will be speaking to. What is already known in this field? What questions or contradictory evidence currently exist in this field?
3. Motivate your paper. Imagine your readers are reading this paper voluntarily. You need to convince them that reading your paper is worthwhile. Why is answering your research question important? What kind of decisions will be better informed if the decision maker learned about the results from this project?

Important Elements of an Introduction:

1. *Clearly state your research question / the purpose of your paper:* This should be done very early in the introduction, but probably not the first sentence or first paragraph. Your audience will not want to continue reading if it takes them too much time to figure out what the point is for your paper. What do you hope to accomplish? Who is your audience? That is who would use or be interested in your results? What decisions can be better informed by learning the outcome of your research project?
2. *Provide relevant background information:* Bring your audience from their world to where they need to be. Provide enough background information so that your readers understand the context and motivation for your paper and form their own informed opinion on the subject. Introduce your reader to findings from other papers in this field, and pay special attention to what still needs to be figured out or what conflicting evidence there is in the field, especially as it relates to the purpose of your paper. Your background information should also help the reader understand why further investigation into this topic is important or interesting.
3. *Communicate your message in a clear and meaningful way:* Organize your discussion to build an argument or tell a story. Build an argument for why issues in this field are important or interesting. Tell a story about what is known in this field and what needs further investigation. For each piece of evidence, background information, or journal article cited, think about how it relates to the overall argument or story, and capture that in your narrative. Be careful to not let your introduction sound like a kid's letter to mom and dad from summer camp, "Then there is this... then there is this..."
4. *Ask all the relevant questions:* Have all of the relevant questions been asked? Are the questions focused on the essential issues? Think about the multiple problems, symptoms, and solutions you should try to identify and analyze.
5. *Literature review - Use existing evidence to motivate your research:* This is closely related to Point #2 above to provide relevant background information, but it concerns specifically citing other journal articles. In some written work, the literature review may be a separate section, and in others the literature review is part of the introduction, and which approach is taken is often the writers choice. For the purpose of this project, we will include the literature review as part of the introduction.

- Review relevant literature that puts your research question into context with previous research. The literature should help provide background information that helps your readers understand the issues in this field, what is currently known and unknown, and how your purpose is related to others' work.
 - Your literature review also has the purpose to help motivate your work. Other papers may have suggested that work along your purpose is important. Taken together, multiple papers may have evidence which conflicts with one another, suggesting further investigation may be needed for decision makers in your audience. Consider whether there is a case for replicating an analysis similar to another study, but for your specific population.
 - Your literature review should be *telling a story* about what is known and not known in this field, citing other research papers provides examples for the story. Think about the overall story, or overall point, that you are trying to make with your literature review. Think about how each paper you cite is related to that larger purpose.
 - Use a simple citation procedure like Lastname (YEAR). Example, "Herro and Murray (2010) find that uncertainty...." Details about the journal title, article title, and authors full names can be found in the bibliography.
6. *Introduce your reader to how you answer your research question - and justify it:* Most of these details should be put in your methodology section, but still, by the end of the introduction your reader should have a basic idea for how you plan to answer your research question. Consider including the population, the use of a survey, and a general description of the types of questions in the survey.
 7. *Communicate effectively* by not distracting the reader with grammar and spelling errors. Writing is professional and follows common rules for reporting research, i.e. sources are cited correctly, quotes used appropriately.

Length: There is no length requirement for the introduction. It is most important that you write an introduction which meets the above expectations. Well written introductions sections will usually be between 3 and 5 pages, double spaced.