

The Purpose of Writing

Fredrick Douglas said, “Without struggle, there can be no progress.” This principle is perhaps universal in application. Writing is a skill that is not outside of this application. Writing communicates knowledge. When viewed in the light of educational maturity, writing progresses from short tidbits to structured communications of original research relaying new knowledge to the audience. Writing progresses from relaying unsupported material, to making points with supported material, to relaying the results of original research. Basic elements expand progressively.

Ask yourself what you would want to know in order about a topic and you uncover a basic pattern of questions to answer about a topic of the writing. Defining is the first element. The definition may vary depending on how broad the definition is applied. Setting the scope of the topic is important.

The background surrounding the topic can answer the basic investigational questions that are applicable. These may include who, what, where, when, why, and how. The author can answer these queries as in depth as he or she deems necessary. But the goal is to identify the main aspects of the topic that the reader will need to know in order to comprehend the information to be relayed.

The topic has a problem, or main reason of importance that you are addressing in the writing. Fully explaining the problem or reason for importance comes early in the writing. In research it occurs in the introduction and may be three paragraphs. It would typically answer what the overriding issue is, where the problem occurs, and what can be done about it.

The problem or main reason for writing must be answered. This includes presenting future questions of importance, and application of the knowledge.

Let's examine how an assignment about organizational behavior might begin. You would begin searching for books, articles, journals, blogs, or other sources of information about "organizational behavior." Based upon the common elements addressed above you would first find out what it meant and what it included. You would then begin exploring what you had found and answering basic investigational questions along the way. You would arrive at a problem or a reason for the importance of "organizational behavior."

Depending on how in depth the author was getting in the writing, he or she would have to set the limits of what to cover. Maybe the author was interested in or observed a connection with culture. Maybe the assignment is not large enough in scope to cover all aspects of organizational behavior that the author has uncovered. He or she may limit the writing to how culture plays into organizational behavior.

Take a look at the author's introductory paragraph and identify the elements of an introduction. The introduction is presented below.

Culture is the window to the soul. Culture is the foundation to understanding organizational behavior. The three levels of culture are artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions (Schein, 2004). Since behavior is influenced by culture, one must comprehend the elements of culture to appreciate the moral decisions behind behavior. Organizations make decisions influenced by culture.

Is there an attention getter? Is there a thesis statement? What will be the main subjects or objectives to the body? What is the transition sentence?

Now you can guess that the body of the writing will explore the topics in order and following basic elements. The problem may not even be a spelled out specific situation, but it might be that the audience must grasp culture before it can understand organizational behavior.

As the author progresses this theme and his or her educational maturity increases, the topic of organizational behavior may take a more in depth turn. The author may be developing a study to discover new information or confirm existing information in a different way. Now culture may not be the only subject of the writing. It may have developed into exploring culture, moral decision making, organizational framework, and organization change.

Writings become more complex but never lose basic structure. In the overall scheme it will progress to the structure of a dissertation or master's thesis where the chapters are arranged as an introduction, review of literature, methodology of the study, report of findings, and interpretation of the results. Each will contain required elements that grow from the original basic elements of an investigation essay.

Research Presentations

Research at any level of education is still research. Examining the structure of how original research is presented in a dissertation or master's thesis will shed some light on how structure progresses and is maintained from the foundational basics.

In the first chapter or introduction chapter of research writing the goal is to gain the reader's attention. This is done by presenting a problem, formulating questions to be researched and setting up the importance of the research to be done. In order to do this you would begin with an attention getter. It may be more complex than a quote, or short statistic. It may even be a collection of stories. But it pulls the reader in, just like a short attention getter in a basic essay or training presentation. Secondly an introduction has a problem statement. In research writing this may 200 words or thereabouts and cover the overriding issue, the venue or setting in which the problem occurs, and suggests an action to counter the problem. The introduction will contain an outline statement of the literature review for chapter 2. It will also present the questions that the

research will attempt to answer and make it clear as to why they are important. It will cover the general type of research and foreshadow the methods to be used and why the type of research, usually qualitative or quantitative, is most appropriate. It must then relay how the research might be used, and depending on the situation, what the foreseeable limitations are. As you can see, an introductory chapter may add content, but it still maintains foundational structure.

Compare an introduction to and introductory chapter in the chart below.

Introduction	Introductory Chapter
Attention Getter Problem statement Outline statement Transition to Body	Attention Getter Problem Statement Background Outline Statement of Literature Review Research Questions Type of research Purpose statement Limitations/Assumptions Application of possible outcomes

The EKU writing guide lists the components of an introductory as:

Background – Provide a contextual background in which the problem that you plan to research exists.

Statement of the Problem – State the problem in clear terms. Utilize data to support what the problem is and why the problem exists.

Purpose of the Study – State the purpose of your research as it relates to the problem that you have presented.

Potential Significance – State the potential significance that your study will have as it pertains to the problem that you have identified.

Definition of Terms – Define important terms used throughout your research that might not be readily understood by the reader.

Assumptions – State assumptions that you will make throughout your research, such as participant statements will be truthful or data that has been collected is accurate based on the source from where it was gathered.

Limitations – State the limitations that will be present in relation to the applicability of your research. This will refer to generalizability of your findings if conducting quantitative research or the ability for the reader to identify transferable elements if conducting qualitative research.

Organization of the Study – Describe how your research will be physically presented in written form indicating the sections of your thesis and what will be included in each section.

(EKU, 2012).

The body of your writing contains the arguments or points that you are making about the topic. In research writing, the literature review or chapter 2 of the work divides the problem into categorical points from literature and previous studies. Each category is treated like an investigation and answers the basic research questions about the category. It goes into detail about the background of the problem, the underlying issues, any knowledge that must be understood by the reader to understand the research, and brings the reader up to date on existing thought, alternate theories, and the latest research. It includes a conclusion or summary of the covered information since it is lengthy.

Compared to your body of an essay, the literature review is much more in depth and prepares the reader to digest original research. Truly, an essay is an opinion, either opinion supported by more or less evidence, or pure commentary. It proves something only as much as you convince the reader. In presenting research you actually prove or provide new information. But the structure of the body exists within each categorical presentation and maintains the basic investigational queries.

Body of Essay	Literature Review
Divided by Points Answers basic investigational queries	Categorical Division Answers basic investigational queries Conclusion

In research writing, chapter 3 lays out the methods used in the research and chapter 4 presents the raw findings without interpretation. These chapters begin with summarizing the project so that each chapter brings the reader up to speed and could stand alone without the introduction and the literature review. Your basic essay will not have a counterpart. Except to say that the evidence you present by point in the body of the essay is the presentation of findings. In other words, you are investigating the topics and presenting what you have found in each point contained in the body. You may also make interpretations in the body with each point.

Chapter 5 of research writing is where the author makes their interpretations and presents their view based upon the research contained in the project, which is the literature review and the original research. It is where they make their points and draw conclusions. It would also address the limitations of the study and attempt to overcome them and suggest future research. Again we can make a comparison to the conclusion of your basic essay.

The conclusion of your essay will summarize the points covered in the body, but in a new way. It might include application to a presented situation. It is the final word and place where the author makes an overall interpretation based upon the points made in the body and the evidence that supports the overall view. It answers the problem statement from the introduction.

I hope by comparing the structure of an essay to the structure of a research presentation, you can appreciate the importance of writing skills. In this course we will progress in writing an investigational essay while we are exploring some of the basic knowledge for your studies of occupational safety.