



COMDIS-HSD writing workshop

How to write an introduction

The quality of your introduction will often determine whether a reviewer progresses or rejects your paper. The best introductions follow a clear structure and make every word count.

1

Keep it concise

Length and line spacing matter. Use 1.5 or double spacing and keep your introduction to between 1 and 2 pages long.

Before you write anything...

Invest some time learning about what an introduction should and should not cover. For a good introduction you need to describe the present situation or problem; briefly summarise what previous research has shown and then say why you have carried out your study. To find out more about this structure, see the SORT-IT presentation on writing an introduction.

2

Keep sentences short and language clear

Follow Plain English principles. Keep your sentences short. Use one sentence to convey one idea. Don't use a complex word where a simple one will do. The Plain English Campaign has some very good guides and checklists that offer quick tips on simplifying your writing.

3

Avoid too many references

Avoid over-citing in your introduction. Your introduction needs to flow and a long comprehensive review will distract your reader and obscure your message. Too many references may also raise suspicions among reviewers about whether you have really read all the literature.

4

Link your objectives to your data

A well-structured introduction will end with a clear statement about the aim of your study. You can state your broad aim and then some specific objectives after this. Ensure your objectives relate to the data you have collected. If you can't easily link your objectives to your data, your objectives are probably too broad and you may need to revisit them.

5

Summarised from a presentation by Dr Anthony Harries as part of The Union and MSF SORT-IT course