The "Introduction" section is the jumping-off point that sets the terms and tone for your work and familiarizes your reader with your topic and the purpose of your research or study. This handout will help you craft an introduction for a piece of scientific writing.

**Purpose**

The introduction provides relevant context for your argument, moving from the known to the unknown and from the general to the specific. The introduction has the shape of a funnel or inverted pyramid, drawing the reader’s attention to a single, definite point in the conversation about the subject.

*Note:* For practice drafting an introduction, please see the worksheet at the end of this handout.

**Elements**

**Background**

The background portion of your introduction is the broadest part of the funnel or inverted pyramid and covers what is known about your topic. The level of detail that you include in your background will depend on your audience and the aim of your research. The background also provides a rationale for your study, indicating why your subject is important.

**Statement of the Problem**

This is where you explicitly state what is unknown about your subject, giving your writing a clear direction to follow. Include a detailed overview of the issue your work intends to solve or improve.

**Purpose**

The purpose of your research relates closely to your statement of the problem. If your problem identifies a gap in knowledge, your purpose will explain your attempt to fill this gap. You will achieve your purpose by asking and answering research questions.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Research questions and hypotheses are directly related to your problem and purpose. A research question is open-ended and informed by the theories used to develop your study, as well as your research approach.

*Note:* For more information on forming research questions, please see our handout on this topic.
A hypothesis proposes a relationship between two variables and—most importantly—can be tested.

**Significance of the Study**
Your study’s significance is the answer to the question, “So what?” Explain possible implications of your research so that readers understand you’re asking questions worth answering.

The significance of your study should be based on your “Literature Review” section, a critical synthesis of relevant literature that provides context for your own research.

*Note:* For more information on writing a “Literature Review” section, please see our handout on this topic.

**Assumptions, Theoretical Framework, and Experimental Approach**
Specifying your assumptions about any number of factors impacting your study is essential to transparency and clarity. Among these is the theory that informs your project. Describing your theoretical framework connects your research to the larger conversation about your issue.

When detailing your experiment, explain your approach (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, etc.) and how it relates to your theory.

**Limitations and Delimitations**
Some aspects of your research can limit your ability to generalize your findings. For this reason, you should identify your study’s *limitations* (limits beyond your control) and *delimitations* (limits you have established).

**Definitions**
Some words have multiple interpretations. Clearly define any terms that you are using in an unusual or specific way to prevent misreading.

**Conclusion**
While not necessarily required for all introductions, a brief summary and preview of the rest of your text can help your readers synthesize the context you have established in this section.

**References**
What does my audience know about the issue? ____________________________________________
What doesn't my audience know about the issue? __________________________________________
What has already been said about the issue? ______________________________________________
Why is the issue timely? __________________________________________________________________
Where is there a gap in knowledge about the issue?________________________________________
What is my research question? ____________________________________________________________
How does my question address the gap in knowledge? _________________________________________
What is my claim? ______________________________________________________________________
How does my claim fill the gap in knowledge? _____________________________________________
How does my claim answer my research question? ____________________________________________
Why would the audience care about my claim? _______________________________________________
What does my audience need to know in order to understand my claim?
•  ______________________________________________________________________
•  ______________________________________________________________________
•  ______________________________________________________________________