

Guidelines* for the Introduction for the Honours Thesis

* Note that these are guidelines, not rules. Some aspects may vary by project.

1. Before you start writing, use an outline (shouldn't be more than 1-2 pages) to focus on the information that is most relevant. Use this to guide your literature search. You won't include this in the final thesis but converting it to prose will produce the first part of your Abstract or Summary.
2. Use plain, concise, and precise language in an academic genre style. Don't make things more complicated, strive for clarity.
3. Start with a 'thesis and development statement' that provides a brief overview of the main idea of the thesis, so that reader understands why you are reviewing the topics in the paragraphs that follow.
 - to generate this: take your overview outline or make a list of the section titles and subheadings that you will include, then form a few sentences that describe them.
 - this is similar to an 'elevator pitch', but to another scientist.
4. The introduction should synthesize the literature, not just state it or describe it.
 - Have a good foundation of citations for statements where the reader would like to know more information.
 - It is fine to use the same citation, e.g. Moerman et al., 2014, multiple times as appropriate.
 - Be sure to cite the literature from your laboratory upon which your work is based, don't assume everyone knows it.
5. Define any terms, gene names, and jargon that are important to understand.
 - Find out what are the conventions for naming genes and proteins in your system.
 - Briefly describe methodologies from previous studies that are relevant.
6. Consider using section titles or subtitles to structure your argument or background.
7. Explain why your study system or organism is useful for this study (key concepts, Genus species name)
8. Use figures in the introduction to illustrate key concepts but not gratuitously, and include the citation in the Figure legend.
9. Start broadly and narrow to your research question.
 - Build up an argument from the literature until you crescendo with your hypothesis and objectives.
 - Explicitly state your hypothesis/objectives.
 - Include a broad statement of the methodical approaches that is linked to your research questions, to link the Intro to methods sections.
10. Emphasize the knowledge gap and your motivation for the study.
11. If your topic is controversial, state both sides of the arguments.
 - This could include alternative approaches to your methods and pros/cons of them.