

Rhetorical Moves in research paper introductions

Introduction sections of research papers follow a typical pattern in response to two types of competition:

1. Competition for research space
2. Competition for readers

Create-A-Research-Space (CARS) model (Swales & Feak, 2004): the work of others and/or what is known about the world is primary, and your own work is secondary (note: this is reversed in the Discussion section).

Move 1	Establishing a research territory	
	a	by showing that the general research area is important, central, interesting, problematic, or relevant in some way (optional)
	b	by introducing and reviewing items of previous research in the area (obligatory)
Move 2		
Move 2	Establishing a niche	
	a	by indicating a gap in the previous research, or by extending previous knowledge in some way (obligatory)
Move 3		
Move 3	Occupying the niche	
	a	by outlining purposes or stating the nature of the present research (obligatory)
	b	by listing research questions or hypotheses
	c	by announcing principal findings
	d	by stating the value of the present research
	e	by indicating the structure of the research paper

Below are some examples of strong opening statements for claiming centrality (Move 1a)

- Recently there has been growing interest in ...
- The possibility of ... has generated wide interest in ...
- The development of ... is a classic problem in ...
- The development of ... has led to the hope that ...
- The ... has become a favourite topic of analysis ...
- Knowledge of ... has great importance for ...
- The study of ... has become an important aspect of ...
- The central issue in ... is ...
- (The) ... has been extensively studied in recent years.
- Many investigators have recently turned to ...
- The relationship between ... and ... has been investigated by many researchers.
- Many recent studies have focused on ...

Below are different phrases that may be useful for establishing a niche (Move 2)

'Quasi-negative' phrases:

- However, little information ...
- Little attention/ work/ data/ research/ ...
- However, few studies ...
- Few investigations/ researchers/ attempts ...

Contrastive phrases:

- The research has tended to focus on ..., rather than on ...
- These studies have emphasized ..., as opposed to ...
- Although considerable research has been devoted to ..., rather less attention has been paid to ...

Raising a question/hypothesis/a need:

- However, it remains unclear whether ...
- It would be of interest to learn how ...
- If these results could be confirmed, they would provide strong evidence for ...
- The findings suggest that this approach might be less effective when ...
- It would seem, therefore, that further investigations are needed in order to ...

Ways to show extension of previous knowledge:

- These recent developments in ... clearly have considerable potential. In this paper, we demonstrate ...
- The literature shows that X is a useful technique for This study used X to ...

There are two main ways to 'occupy the niche' (Move 3)

1. Purposive – The author(s) indicate their main purpose(s)
 - The aims of the present paper is to ...
 - The main purpose of the experiment reported here was to ...
 - The aim of this investigation was to test ...
 - Our primary objective in this paper is to provide ...
2. Descriptive – The author(s) describe the main feature of their research
 - This paper reports on the results obtained ...
 - In this paper we give the preliminary results for ...
 - This study was designed to evaluate ...
 - We now report the interaction between ...
 - The present work extends the use of the last model by ...