



## Tell Your Story. Write Your Paper. Improve Your Community.

### Introduction

Have you ever had ideas or done breakthrough work that helped you or your company accomplish a good design or project? Many of us have been blessed with the opportunity to do so. But have you also broken into a cold sweat – the condition of sweating and feeling cold at the same time, which fear causes – when you must document or write about these accomplishments? You are not alone. Writing is HARD for so many of us!

The Rocscience Africa Conference 2022 offers you and your team the chance to gain the rewards you deserve for your work and to contribute to the development of others. It promises to be a fantastic professional gathering, and we cannot wait for you to tell your story. The current piece aims to help you publish a paper at the conference. It will help you break out of the fear of writing and enjoy the rewards and recognition that come with telling our community about your technical accomplishments. We want to go along with you on your exciting journey of writing your paper.

### Just Start!

**Start with an Outline.** To successfully write a paper, you will need to start with an outline. This sketch (and that is what it really is) will help you organize your thoughts. You can start by literally writing down ideas without regard for organization or perfection. Those can come much later. Do not sweat the details at this stage. Just feel free to throw down your ideas.

**Draw a skeleton of the work.** Writing the outline of your technical or research paper will jog your memory for crucial details of your work, how they came about, who did what task or played what role, and essential connections between the different pieces. Enjoy the free mind and draw a skeleton (stick figure) of the work. You will be surprised at how this idea sketch can powerfully guide you through the entire process of writing your paper.

**Verbally explain to another person.** Sometimes, it helps to start your outline by verbally explaining what your paper is about (or hopes to accomplish) to another person. After talking to the person, write down what you just discussed. Discussing with another person allows you to get feedback and offer clarifications immediately. This conversation will help you realize problems with your argument or explanations and compel you to improve them.

You can start at this very moment to write or draw your outline. Have you finished putting down an outline? Congratulations! You have reached a significant milestone! You are already well on your way to telling your unique story.

### Put Structure to Your Outline

You can now divide the story or research that you captured in your outline into various components. You can never go wrong if you start organizing your sketch into the following elements: an Introduction, a Body, and a Conclusion. Should you feel like this exercise is causing you to be overwhelmed, please take a moment to dwell on these four points:

1. You have a story to tell that will benefit people, change their behaviour or circumstances, and convince them to adopt new approaches. Your account might inspire or compel someone to also do something new or different for the better.
2. You have started well – you have an outline.
3. Organizing this outline will help you keep the story together and avoid missing important details.
4. You do not have to organize the components in the way we listed them. You can even write the Introduction last! It needs to be there, but it does not have to be the first to be written.

By the way, you can apply the Introduction, Body and Conclusion structure to even your paragraphs. And be liberal with the paragraphs. If you are to make mistakes, err on the side of using many of them rather than a few of them. Readers will understand your work better that way.



## The Introduction

To help you write the Introduction, we will describe its purpose. The Introduction will **explain why you needed to solve the problem**. For example, it can tell everyone the significant impact and consequences of not solving the problem.

The Introduction can also tell how hard it was to develop a solution to the problem. It can **narrate apparent reasons why the previous way of doing things was not addressing the difficulties**. At this stage, you can also describe what others tried that were not successful, or even if successful, did not fully overcome the obstacles.

You can then say here that you solved the problem and can **tell your readers what to expect as they follow your solution approach**. Sometimes, you may not achieve your starting aim despite your best efforts or may have changed course as you tried to solve the problem. These obstacles are all part of your story so tell it.

You can **make your readers aware of why no one else previously thought of your approach**. You could also say why they did not use your course, even if they thought of it. These are all powerful insights.

If you have not previously thought about it, this may be an excellent time to understand your audience. Who are you telling your story? Who will read your paper? Who do you want to help? What is their background? What motivates them? After reading your story, what are the key things you want them to remember? Once you answer these questions and incorporate them into your Introduction, you are many steps closer to success.

All the work you have put into the Introduction will help your readers understand why your work is significant.

I am sure you have read that a technical or research paper must have a thesis statement. This advice is actually very useful. The thesis statement is a straightforward concept. It comprises one or two sentences that tell your readers:

- What your paper will focus on or try to solve (i.e., your thesis statement clearly describes the topic you will be discussing), and
- Briefly describe the central point or points that you will discuss in the paper

Place your thesis statement at the end of your first paragraph (or sometimes at the end of your Introduction if it is short). It is a powerful weapon – use it to stimulate interest in your topic and encourage your readers to continue reading.

Before we leave this section, you must remember one more thing – **you do not have to write everything in chronological order**. It is more important that the story makes sense to your readers. If describing some aspects out of chronological sequence helps, please do so. For example, right from the beginning of reading your story, your audience may be interested to know what worked. So, tell them what they want to learn from the start. You can describe how you got there after you have caught their attention.



## The Body

Your paper's Body can describe the details of what you outline in the Introduction. Remember, though, that you can write this section before the Introduction. The Body should offer deeper or more detailed explanations of your ideas or your work.

First, **mention the key points of what you did.** Be clear in what you want your readers to know; do not let them look for their own meaning.

Second, **provide detailed supporting descriptions.** Your reader is more likely to understand your story when you proceed in this fashion.

Next, **describe the problem or task for each key point or idea** (i.e., tell your reader about the main challenge and its background). This approach will help your readers understand what is essential in your work and why it is important. This helps you not waste your readers' time.

It is necessary (and powerful) for you to compare your work to what others have done. Doing so will help your readers understand your key ideas and contributions and their significance to your community. They will thank you for this.

Honestly, describe any limitations in your work. Your readers will be very grateful.

## The Conclusion

Your conclusion should repeat your thesis from the Introduction. However, it would help if you used different words. You must **briefly summarize the main points in your paper.** Some authors encourage you not to use more than two to three sentences for each key issue.

You can **end the paper with a sentence that states the consequences of using or not using your approach.** Make the statement as relevant to the central thesis as possible and tie your paper's main ideas together.

Good luck with your paper! Just start! You can do it, and the world will be a better place for it.



## Your Simple Template for Writing Your Unique Story

Your Paper Title/Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Audience: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 1. Introduction

List the possible ideas for your introduction:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Statement

(Remember it is the last sentence of your first paragraph or the introduction section itself if it is short.):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Section 2. Body

(Your paper can have only a few or several key points. List them as you think through the paper. At the drafting stage, do not worry too much about how many they are. But at the same time, it will help to group similar items, i.e., combine them into main points.)

Main Point: \_\_\_\_\_

Examples/Details/Explanations:

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

Main Point: \_\_\_\_\_

Examples/Details/Explanations:

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

Main Point: \_\_\_\_\_

Examples/Details/Explanations:

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_



### **Section 3. Conclusion**

Rephrase/ Reword/Restate Your Thesis (Retain the central idea of your thesis statement but use other words or phrases. Place this either at the very beginning of your conclusion or very close to it.):

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Summary Statements on the Main Points (Remember to describe each point in no more than three sentences.):

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Clincher Ideas: \_\_\_\_\_