

Introductions to Dissertations

Dissertations can take different forms, the most common of which are traditional, article compilation, and topic based.¹³ Regardless of the type, an introduction is always included. Dissertation introductions are quite challenging to write and whether these should be written before or after data collection and analysis remains open to debate. If you have done some preliminary work prior to beginning your dissertation research, this can be advantageous for the writing of your introduction since you may already have a sense that your research will yield some interesting findings and that you have reasonable questions and hypotheses to explore. If this is the case, you may have enough preliminary data to write your introduction before all of the findings are in. If, however, you have no data, you may want to delay the writing of your introduction. Recent research by Lim (2010) found that when no preliminary data is available, advisors have suggested that the best strategy is to delay writing the full introduction. Instead, you can begin by discussing the issues that led to the research, writing a little about each, and then fleshing out the introduction after the data has been analyzed.

Regardless of whether you write your introduction before or after analyzing your findings, your introduction may largely follow the CaRS model given in Table 2, but there will likely be some differences. One difference is that the different moves will be expanded, provide more detail, and may not follow the order given. Our informal research revealed that as a result of the expanded moves and details, the dissertation introductions at our institution tend to be between 10–15 pages long and contain as few as seven references to previous literature and as many as 55 (a separate literature review chapter is often included). Our research also revealed that there are disciplinary differences. For instance, dissertation introductions in education and nursing

on average include more citations (an average of 36) than those in civil engineering, which contain on average 11 citations.¹⁴

Another difference between RA introductions and dissertation introductions is that the latter generally provide a rather clear indication of how the dissertation will evolve. This can be accomplished by a type of metadiscourse that Lim (2010) refers to as *directional determinants*—purpose statements, research questions, and hypotheses (if relevant for your research area)—through which you present your work.

Purpose	The purpose of this dissertation is to explore pro-social rule-breaking in the workplace, the foundation of which rests in an employee's desire to promote the welfare of his or her organization.
Research Question	Specifically, this study uses interviews to determine whether employees, when asked about their own rule-breaking behavior, would give examples that appeared to be pro-social rather than selfish or organizationally destructive.
Hypothesis	It is hypothesized that the more value one attaches to one's job or the more one cares about one's work, the more likely one will be to engage in pro-social rule breaking.

The use of directional determinants (typically associated with Move 3—presenting the present work), however, very much depends on your field of study as well as the expectations of your advisor. While dissertations in some fields such as linguistics and education may include all three types of directional determinants, in other fields such as mechanical engineering you may find only purpose statements. If all three types are present, the directional determinants should be related to each other. Specifically, your research questions reveal what you will explore within your objective, indicating the direction that you will take. The hypotheses (your expected outcomes) can be viewed as the answers to the research questions that you have posed.

¹³ Traditional dissertations have separate chapters devoted to introduction, literature review (sometimes part of the introduction), methods, results, discussions, and conclusions. Article compilation dissertations consist of three or more published papers. Topic-based dissertations are organized according to research on different, but related, topics.

¹⁴ A detailed discussion of literature reviews can be found in the volume entitled *Telling a Research Story: Writing a Literature Review*.

Note how the research questions are directly related to the objectives in this excerpt from the opening paragraphs of a dissertation focusing on ethics in decision-making.

① We make thousands of decisions in the course of a lifetime.
 ② Many of these decisions not only affect our own outcomes, but also other people's outcomes. ③ As "all normal people possess a sense of morality" (Krebs, 2008, p. 149), we realize that we should pay attention to the consequences of our decisions for others. ④ But what exactly are the roles ethics and morality play in how we come to make our decisions? ⑤ When do we further our self-interest, and when do we adhere to ethical standards? ⑥ When is certain behavior perceived as ethical, and when is it not? ⑦ Moreover, how do we react when we see that ethical standards are being violated? ⑧ The aim of this dissertation is to shed more light on these questions. ⑨ More specifically, this dissertation will focus on the impact of ethics on self-interest and fairness in economic decision-making (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3), and on how we react when ethical standards are violated (Chapter 4).

⑩ This dissertation aims at providing a more comprehensive picture on when and why people behave ethically, and how they respond to people who do not maintain these standards. ⑪ To be able to tap into the underlying motives, e.g., self-interest and fairness, of ethical decision-making, I turned to the literature on economic games and game theory. ⑫ This literature provides several economic decision-making paradigms with clear and simple structures. ⑬ This makes it possible to disentangle the motivations of fairness and self-interest. ⑭ In the following part of this introduction, I will provide a short overview of the relevant literature on economic games to show how this literature can help us to study ethics in economic decision-making.

—Marijke C. Leliveld

Task Thirty-Eight

Find 3–5 dissertation introductions from your area of interest and ideally written by students of your advisor. Work through these questions to get an idea of the characteristics of dissertation introductions in your field.

1. To what extent do the introductions follow the CaRS model and include any of the variations proposed in Task Nineteen? Are any of the moves recycled or presented in a different order? About how many words are the moves? If an introduction does not follow the CaRS model, how is it organized?
2. Do the introductions contain extensive literature reviews or is the literature review a separate chapter?
3. Do the introductions contain *directional determinants*—purpose statements, research questions, and hypotheses? If so, where in the introduction do they tend to occur? To what extent are the directional determinants of elaborated? List any statements that you think are particularly nice.
4. How would you characterize the opening sentences? Do the introductions start with common knowledge? If so, what kind (facts, definitions, generalizations, something else?) A story? One of the other features described on page 19?
5. Do the introductions tend to have more integral or non-integral citations?
6. Which verbs are used to report the work of others?
7. How common are definitions? Do they seem necessary?
8. Can you detect the author's stance toward the topic? Are there any comments regarding agreement or debate in the field?
9. To what extent do the authors seem to be "present" in their texts? In other words, do you have a sense of a person behind the words in the texts?
10. In what way do ^{you} think your analysis will contribute to the writing of your own introduction?