



LIVELABS

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Writing Tips

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IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD INTRODUCTION

- First and most important thing reviewers read
 - Use a short, descriptive title. Something that maps clearly, correctly, and nicely in reviewer's minds
- Reviewers decide whether to accept / reject a paper based on the intro
 - 95% of the time for me personally
 - Very rarely am I unsure after reading an introduction
- Very rarely (4-5 papers maximum over last 20 years), I have changed from reject to accept
- Usually accept changes to reject based on rest of paper
 - Does not match the intro promises

PARTS OF AN INTRO (1)

1. High level motivation

- 1 to 3 sentences

2. Detailed description of your problem

- what you are doing precisely
- why this is important / useful / ground breaking
- usually with a compelling use case
- About 1 paragraph
- Get to the point (and the best bits) fast.

3. Why the problem is hard

- Crucial for a research paper
- May need to cover related work briefly here
- 1 to 3 paragraphs.

PARTS OF AN INTRO (2)

4. What is your insight / technique / secret to solve the problem

- 1 to 3 paragraphs
- May also need related work description and comparison here

5. Summary of key & most impressive results

- 1 to 2 paragraph

6. Key contributions

- Very useful for reviewers as a summary
- Don't lie!! Reviewers will check and reject if lies are found
- E.g. promising 5,000 users but having only 6 real users...
- No more than 5 or 6 contributions. Usually 3

COMMON REJECTION REASONS (1)

- ***ALWAYS*** spell check your paper.
 - Grammar is hard (reviewers can tolerate this)
 - But spelling mistakes == lazy and not interested
- Get a good English writer (not necessarily a good speaker 😊) to check your intro
 - Most important section and hardest to write well
 - Then fix the system / algorithm description
 - Lower priority is results -- much easier to write
 - Lowest priority is related work

COMMON REJECTION REASONS (2)

- Have clear and legible figures
 - Multiple lines must be distinct
 - Legends and axis must be large enough and clear
- Explain figures / algorithms / systems in text clearly
 - “As you can see, we do well” with nothing further!!
 - ← most reviewer will just assume the figure is wrong
 - “without loss of generality” when it’s not clear
 - ← we assume it has scalability issues
 - “in the interest of space, X is omitted”
 - ← we know what that means... there are no results

COMMON REJECTION REASONS (3)

- Experiment setup must be clear. For Simulations
 - what you used, what parameters you set, how you changed things etc.
 - For your own simulator, how you validated it!!
 - ← reviewers don't think random simulators are correct!
- Systems experiments
 - Description of how data is flowing through your system
 - What was connected to what
 - What inputs / outputs you used / collected / generated
 - What granularity of measurements / data you used
 - Explain the hardware / software setup clearly

COMMON REJECTION REASONS (4)

- **User Studies**
 - Demographics of participants
 - How they were recruited / compensated
 - Instructions given to the users
 - Detailed description of what they did during the test
 - Provide questions asked if they are not standard
- **Provide errors bars and explain outliers in results**
 - Reviewers always want to know about outliers if they are obvious
 - Reviewers want to know how generalizable and statistically significant (t-test where applicable) your results are

COMMON REJECTION REASONS (5)

- Assuming Domain Knowledge
 - Reviewers may not be experts
 - Experts tend to be brutal btw..
 - Make sure they can understand the context and background
 - They come from different countries, experiences
 - Paper **must** set a common understanding where needed
 - Particularly important for problems specific to certain countries

WHY PAPERS GET REJECTED AT PC MEETINGS

- No champion asking for it to be accepted
 - Strong champion >>> many weak rejects
 - Many weak accepts <<<< 1 strong reject
 - Experts >>> reviewers without domain expertise
 - ➔ paper must appeal strongly to someone in the room
- Lack of key related work
 - ➔ authors don't know what they are doing
- Results are not comprehensive enough
 - Only shown in “perfect” conditions
 - No sensitivity tests / convincing deployment tests
- Results don't match promises in introduction
 - Sadly, a very common reason for rejection
 - ➔ don't exaggerate but also don't underplay

HANDS-ON PRACTICE!

- Live Intro writing!!
- Need a volunteer
- We'll do it in Latex.
 - Cygwin in windows
 - We'll show you how to set it up