

Scrutiny of the introduction

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Abstract:

The introduction to a technical paper should be an invitation to readers to invest their time reading it. Typically this invitation has three parts (1) the review, (2) the claim, and (3) the agenda. In the *claim* the author should say why the paper's *agenda* is a worthwhile extension of its historical *review*. Personal pronouns should be used in the claim and anywhere else the author expresses judgement, opinion, or choice.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the years I have participated in reading committees of more than a hundred doctoral dissertations. Additionally, reports of the Stanford Exploration Project (SEP) contain about sixty papers a year, and I am nominally in charge of making them presentable. In all this activity I have seen many poor abstracts, and in each case I have spared myself and the author much struggle by referring to the short paper, [Scrutiny of the abstract](#), by Landes [1966], which was made available to SEG's aspiring authors. I rarely rewrite authors' abstracts any more---it's usually enough to have them read Landes' paper and rewrite it themselves. Landes' own abstract is worth quoting:

The abstract is of the utmost importance, for it is read by 10 to 500 times more people than hear or read the ent

intended to be a historical review going back to Newton or Descartes. Try to find a few papers by your office mates, your advisor, your predecessors, or other associates. That way you might find somebody to give you helpful criticism!

Paper Lecture
Review Attention getter
Claim Thesis
Agenda Preview

CONCLUSION

This short article is not a typical technical paper, but you might like to look back at the introduction to see if I follow my own advice.

REFERENCE

Landes, Kenneth K., 1966, Scrutiny of the abstract, II, Bulletin of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, 50, p.1992
[Justin Zobel](#)