

Making an argument about the significance of your research

Writing in Biology: BioTAP question 2

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Your thesis should contain a substantive literature review that places your research within its appropriate scientific context. This literature review should not only describe what is known about your topic, but should also identify the specific **gaps** in knowledge that your project intends to address. Beyond simply summarizing the salient literature, you should describe how your research addresses the gaps in the literature, and you should **make an argument** for the broader significance of your research.

A strong thesis will review the literature, demonstrates how your research fills a gap, and presents an explicit and compelling argument for the broader significance or scientific value of your research.

Practice exercise

The following are three examples of student writing taken from biology honors theses written within the past few years. Use the following guiding questions to assess whether or not each passage makes an explicit and compelling argument for the broader significance or scientific value of the student's research. Then, rank the three examples on a scale of 1 (i.e., the strongest) to 3 (i.e., the weakest) with regard to how well the writer structures his/her argument.

Guiding questions

1. Does the student

