# **Writing an Introduction**

# **What is an introduction**?

An introduction is the first paragraph (or paragraphs for longer essays) of an essay that presents the topic of your paper to the reader. Your introduction should accomplish the following:

* Grab the reader’s attention with a **hook sentence**.
* Introduce the topic of your paper to the reader by providing brief background information.
* Indicate the structure of your essay.
* Highlight your clear and focused argument in a thesis statement.

*The following are some suggestions you can use to start your introduction when you feel stuck.*

## **The Hook Sentence**

To write an effective hook sentence, identify your audience and the purpose of your writing. For example, if you are writing a persuasive essay on the harmful effects of smoking, you might choose to use a shocking statistic to **hook** your reader.

**Example 1: The Shocking Statistic Hook**

 According to a study conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking is the leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for one of every five deaths.

**Example 2: The Question Hook**

This type of hook triggers the reader’s curiosity about the topic of the paper.

Have you ever wondered why people wear wedding rings, or why the ring is always worn on the third finger of the left hand?

 “Wedding Ring” in *The Kid Who Invented the Popsicle: And Other Surprising Stories About Inventions*

by Don L. Wuffson

**Example 3: The Interesting Fact Hook**

The Baby Ruth candy bar was not, as is commonly believed, named after Babe Ruth, the famous baseball player.

 “Baby Ruth Candy Bar” in *The Kid Who Invented the Popsicle: And Other Surprising Stories About Inventions*

by Don L. Wuffson

## **Other ways to start your introduction**

### **Literary Analysis Paper**

If you are working on a paper that analyzes a literary text(s), state the title(s) and the author(s) of the work(s) in the introduction.

### **Restate the question**

Many students begin their introduction paragraphs with a restatement of the essay question. If you choose this route, try to make it more interesting. Consider the following two examples:

**Assignment Prompt**: Why are introductions important in essays?

**A weak restatement of prompt**: Introductions are important in an essay because they introduce the topic of the paper.

**A strong restatement of prompt:** Introductions are important in an essay because they give a writer the chance to make a first impression on the reader; not only do they announce the topic of an essay, but they should also capture the reader’s interest**.**

## **Sample Introduction and Tips**

Did you know that you do not have to write your introduction before writing the rest of your essay? Although the reader reads the introduction first, writing it may be easier after you have found a solid focus for your paper and presented your argument in the body paragraphs. An introduction begins with an engaging hook sentence that grips your reader’s interest, followed by brief background information on your topic of choice and then a concise presentation of your paper’s main points. It ends with a thesis statement that announces your argument. Introductory paragraphs are essential to any essay, as they grab the reader’s attention, acquaint the reader with the topic of the paper, and indicate the clear focus of the writer through a thesis statement.

**Question Hook**: Did you know that you do not have to write your introduction before writing the rest of your essay?

**Indicate Structure of Essay**: An introduction begins with an engaging hook sentence that grips your reader’s interest, followed by brief background information on your topic of choice and then a concise presentation of your paper’s main points. It ends with a thesis statement that announces your argument.

**Thesis Statement**: Introductory paragraphs are essential to any essay as they grab the reader’s attention, acquaint the reader with the topic of the paper, and indicate the clear focus of the writer through a thesis statement.

**Strategies for Writing Conclusions**

# **The Purpose of a Conclusion**

* Reminds the reader of your thesis and arguments

Especially with long essays, reiterating your thesis and arguments in the conclusion is important because your reader may have forgotten them by the end of the paper. In addition, your thesis is the main focus of your paper, which is why it’s so important to bring it up in your conclusion. When you restate the thesis, however, make sure that you are not merely rephrasing it, but that you are highlighting the gist of the paper and showing your reader that you have proven your thesis throughout the essay.

* Brings your paper to a close
* Allows you to say the last words on the topic you have chosen

Your conclusion is your chance to make the final comments on the topic of your paper. It tells your reader that you have finished making your main arguments. Now it’s time to make a lasting impression on the reader that gets him/her to ponder the topic further.

**Contents of a Conclusion**

* Rephrase your thesis: this is important because it reminds your reader of your argument as well as its significance. It should answer the “so what” question. Consider the following example:
1. **If your paper argues that the readers should buy organic instead of conventional produce, you might say, “Buying organic produce will not only reduce the risk of ingesting harmful pesticides, but it will also be a way to vote with your dollar.”**
* Briefly summarize the main points of your essay
* End your conclusion with a memorable statement like:
1. **A sentence that makes the reader think more about the topic**

*Example*: If you are writing a paper on the negative influence of social media on teenagers in America, you might end your conclusion with a call for creating stricter rules that impose an age restriction on social media usage.

1. **Suggest a solution or ask a question for further contemplation**

*Example*: If you are writing a paper on the environmental benefits of solar energy, you might end your conclusion by suggesting a brief plan the government can implement to encourage citizens to use solar panels in their homes.

1. **Connect your paper to a larger context**

*Example*: If you are writing a paper on the tools the Ancient Egyptians used to build the Pyramids, you might end your conclusion with a statement saying that although tools and heavy lifting equipment have evolved since then, it would still take us about five years, two thousand workers, and five billion dollars to build the Pyramids today.

# **Things to Avoid in a Conclusion**

* Don’t use *in conclusion*, *in summary*, *in closing*: these closing phrases function better in speeches than in writing.
* Don’t state your thesis for the first time in your conclusion.

Your thesis should be clearly stated in the introduction because it provides a roadmap for your essay and tells your readers exactly what they’re going to read about. If it isintroduced for the first time in your conclusion, your reader will not know your stance on the topic and the paper will lose focus.

* Don’t bring up new ideas or points that should have been included in your body paragraphs.

All your main points and supporting arguments belong in the body paragraphs of your essay. If you include a new main point in your conclusion, you will confuse your readers and your paper will have an abrupt ending rather than a smooth closure*.*

# **Sample Conclusions**

 The amount of student loan debt is an indication that something is definitely wrong with the system. Although universities need an income to survive, getting a college education should still come at no direct cost to the student. Free education would allow for a more educated nation as a whole, it would leave some students with more time to work on their studies than their jobs, and it could encourage universities to get more creative. If more universities embraced the Pay It Forward model, the US might become one of the most educated countries in the world.

 “Should College Education Be Free”

 By Eden Meirow, 2015

*A Christmas Carol* has remained popular for over 150 years because it addresses a basic question with which many people still struggle—the relative value of financial success and kindness. The play answers this question by showing that financial success offers no guarantee of happiness and love, but kindness brings many rewards. If society today would take this lesson seriously, all would benefit.

(Sample concluding paragraph for a response to a literature essay, n.d)

#  **Final Words on Introductions and Conclusions**

In the same way that your introduction makes a first impression on the reader, the conclusion will be your chance to make a lasting and memorable impression. It will also bring your paper full circle. Think of your introduction and conclusion as the frame of your essay.

An introduction begins with general, background information and ends with a more narrow, specific statement: the thesis. The conclusion reverses that pattern and begins with a focused argument, namely a rephrase of your thesis, and ends with a more general idea.

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