

INTRODUCTIONS

PURPOSE:

An introduction is often the most difficult part of the paper to write. Many writers look at the blank screen or paper and do not know where to begin. Understandably, this is where most anxiety arises because writers understand that this is the most important part of the paper. Quite simply, if a reader's interest is not captured in the first paragraph, it is difficult to get him/her to keep reading. This is true of teachers and peers alike.

In order to get started, think of your introduction as a bridge that links readers to your topic. You must think of ways to engage readers from their everyday thoughts to your topic in a creative way that makes them care about what you are writing.

MAKING A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION:

The opening paragraph gives writers a chance to make a great first impression. If the writing is concise, engaging and well written, readers will be excited about reading your essay and look forward to your viewpoint. On the other hand, if your first impression is filled with vague, disorganized and error-filled writing, readers may create a negative impression and be reluctant to read further.

Making a great first impression means that you want to create an inviting atmosphere for readers. In a sense, readers want to be "hooked" into reading more. This means that the very first sentence should be intriguing, awe inspiring, contemplative, or informative.

Listed below are great ways to start an essay:

- Begin with a **notable quotation**
- Begin with a **question**
- Begin with an acknowledgment of an **opinion opposite** to the one you plan to take
- Begin with a very **short narrative** or **anecdote** that has a direct connection to your topic
- Begin with an **interesting or surprising fact**
- Begin with a definition or **explanation of a term** relevant to your paper
- Begin with irony or **paradox**
- Begin with an **analogy**. Make sure it's original but not too far-fetched

WHAT TO INCLUDE

Remember that your readers are also looking for a great deal of information in the introduction. They are likely asking themselves questions like, "What is this essay about?" "What stance is the writer taking" or "Why should I care about this topic?"

In order to capture readers' interests, it is the responsibility of the writer to address these concerns. Ideally, you will pique readers' interests in the opening line(s) and they will be looking for more.

Depending on the type of essay you are writing, different types of information should be included. However, most essays need:

- some background information on the topic,
- an opinion or assertive statement of your claims, and
- a thesis statement.

Sometimes these elements are considered the preview to your paper.

It would be wonderful for writers if there were a formula for writing effective introductions, however these types of introductions are often boring and ineffective. Good writing means that the author has included their own thoughts and opinions because they care about them in a way that is revealed through their own writing voice. This voice is unique to each writer.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Simple restatements of the essay question or topic.
- Random unrelated facts disconnected from the thesis statement
- Webster's Dictionary definitions
- Broad sweeping statements that do not connect to the thesis statement
- Book report type information listing book title, author, and basic facts about the book

STUDENT SAMPLE:

*It is a peaceful afternoon waiting for a subway train and then suddenly the coughing starts, blown off as a small cold. Then dizziness and/or faintness is still ignored as a common cold. But then suddenly, the coughing gets worse causing pains in the lungs and chest cavity. Now the worrying starts, but by then it might be too late. Even the best of doctors can only do so much once the final symptoms have started. Now, it's just a wait to see if survival or death is soon to follow. **(Anecdote Lead)***

This may sound like a story out of a horror book, but it isn't. This is an actual threat that can occur at any moment of any day. This threat is called a biological or chemical attack and it is one of the most dangerous things on Earth that humans have made...

(Transition used to introduce topic and background information)

Even though they have different definitions, they do have one thing in common. They are both meant for the killing of life in a supposed, humane way, but in the end it is more inhumane that they like to think.

(Thesis statement which serves as foundation of the essay)