

Writing an Introduction

Definition: Introductions help your readers make a transition between their own world and the arguments you will be writing about. A successful introduction gives your readers the tools they need to get into your topic and care about what you are saying. They also prepare your reader to understand your topic and arguments that you will soon discuss. Without an introduction, your readers would not know **why** you are writing, **what** you are writing about, or **how** you will navigate your argument.

Required Parts:

- Thought provoking first sentence, not a vague question or an unanchored quote (I should know from the first sentence that you are critical thinking)
- Summary of your book with **only** the most important details
- Perhaps start discussing the big ideas in the book and how those ideas are universal to the human experience
- **End** it with your thesis statement (remember, your thesis is only one sentence)

Writing a Conclusion

Definition: Conclusions wrap up what you have been discussing in your paper. After considering specific claims and evidence, your conclusion should restate the theme/argument and remind the reader why your essay is relevant or important. It provides a final perspective on your claims.

Required Parts:

- Transition so that your reader knows you are finishing the paper (In conclusion, In the end, Finally, To recapitulate, etc.)
- Restate your topic and **why** it is important
- Restate your thesis/claim (this can take more than one sentence)
- Maintain objectivity and give the reader closure
- Do NOT address new information
- Do NOT end with a "call to action" (this is when you address the reader and ask/encourage them to apply this to their own lives or to act in some way)

Writing a Thesis Statement

Definition: a **statement** (one sentence) that **summarizes** the main point or claim of an essay, research paper, etc., and is **developed**, **supported**, and **explained** in the text by means of examples and evidence.

Required Parts:

- Presents your **opinions** or thoughts on a subject or an issue while maintaining **objectivity**--you have looked at different opinions on your topic, and you are approaching this essay with little or no bias

- Must contain a subject & an opinion.
- **Answers** a question (Who's the better player: John Elway or Peyton Manning? What is the most efficient energy source? Should we declaw cats? What's the meaning of this text?)
- Has a clear **focus** because it only expresses one topic
 - Good example: The key to being successful in school is focusing on a specific goal, staying organized, and avoiding procrastination.
 - Bad example: The key to being successful in school is focusing on a specific goal, staying organized, and avoiding procrastination, which is also the key to successfully running a business and coaching a football team.
- Is a strong **declarative** statement, so there are no might's, maybes, or perhapses,

Steps:

1. **Create a topic question:** What is the question that you will be answering? What is the problem that you will be solving?
2. Do some research. **What are the primary opinions out there?** You will have to have experts in your sources. What are their main disagreements? (ONLY for a research paper. For a literary analysis, you will need to understand the text well.)
3. What **side** will you take? With whom will you agree? State this clearly. Don't be wishy-washy, even if it's an opinion.
4. Start with, "In my opinion," "I think," or "I believe" and then **state your opinion**
5. What are your **three main points**? Add these to your "I think/believe" statement.
6. **Edit** your thesis statement until it sounds clear, concise, and strong.
7. Now, cross out "In my opinion," "I think," or "I believe"
8. This is your **working thesis**. It will probably change as you write the rest of your paper. Always edit your thesis statement when you feel the need to do so!

Examples:

Attempt 1: "Max wants control and that's why he goes to visit the wild things."

This example needs to be more precise and complex.

Attempt 2: "In *Where the Wild Things Are*, Max uses his imagination to help him process his emotions and to help satisfy his desire for control, which are all common human desires."

This attempt is better, but it still lacks precision and sophistication.

Attempt 3: "For Max, *Where the Wild Things Are* delves into imagination's power to process emotion by exploring the human desire for control which finally evolves into the aching realization that love is more essential than control."

This better serves a thesis for a literary analysis because it states all three main points (need for control, purpose of the imagination, and realization that love is essential) and it communicates why this essay matters (because these are universal problems).