The Writing Center
Online Help Series

Writing Introductions and Conclusions

Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute
Hudson, North Carolina
An essay is like an Oreo cookie

Introduction

Body

Conclusion
Introductions are Overviews
Writing Introductions is as easy as ABC

Add Interest

Bring in Background

Create Thesis
Adding Interest

You never get another chance to make a first impression

Astonisher.....Descriptive.....Quotation.....Question.....List........Comparison....Epigram....OneWord...
Anecdote...Definition....
Option 1: Astonisher...

Shock the reader by giving a startling statistic or fact.

The information must be true.

Example: Every six minutes, a woman is raped. Twenty percent of all women will be raped.
Option 2: Descriptive...

Set the scene. Describe an event that gives the reader a visual picture.

Example: That day was not unlike any other. The blue sky sent a cool breeze which made the field come alive, dancing to the playful tune of the season.
Option 3: Quotation...

Use incredible words spoken by incredible people. If this introduction is used, the quote should summarize the content of the essay.

Example:
“One’s destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things,” says American novelist Henry Miller. The American people, however, have a grim glimpse of the future.
Option 4: Question...

Only use when the question is the most important point of the essay. Your essay should serve as the answer.

Avoid *you*.

*Example:*
Where would I be without my God?
Option 5: List...

List things of interest to grab the reader’s attention. Similar to descriptive beginnings.

Example:
Books, beer, ballgames, and babes add up to today’s college experience for Freshmen.
Option 6: Comparison...

Find similarities between your topic and something the reader is familiar with to create an analogy.

*Example:* The fighter craft soared through the air like seagulls...
Option 7: Epigram...

Short witty saying-This beginning should take a cliché with a new twist.

Avoid common clichés.

Example:
“He was too foolish to commit folly.”
Option 8: One Word...

A single word to capture the reader’s attention. 

Finally... Imagination...

Example: 
Courage. That’s what it takes to win wars and influence people.
Option 9: Anecdote...

A short narrative (story) illustrating a point that relates to the main focus of the essay.

Example:
Max begins his day before the sun wakes up. Putting in twelve-hour work days has become routine just to make ends meet.
Option 10: Definition...

- Avoid using dictionary definitions—especially of common terms
- The word should be out-of-the-ordinary

Example:
“Graffiti” refers to words or phrases written on public sidewalks or buildings.
Bring in Background

Place your essay in proper context. Provide enough background information for your reader to understand the new concepts you discuss in the essay.

• Situational
• Historical
• Philosophical
Option 1: Situational

Pertaining to a particular situation; circumstances

Brief plot summary in literary analysis

Conditions of events

Location, environment, or atmosphere
Option 2: Historical

A description of past events.

Biographical Information

Aspects of Historical Periods and Movements

A brief narrative to examine and analyze the sequence of events
Option 3: Philosophical

Great thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, fundamental truths, or answers to man’s most puzzling questions

Is there a God?

What is Knowledge?

What is good?
Create Thesis

Before you can formulate a thesis statement, you must start with a topic question. Next, form an opinion and state it clearly.

• Question:
  What can be done do solve the city’s problems?

• Opinion:
  Public Transportation would solve the city’s problems

• Thesis:
  Public Transportation can solve some of our city's most persistent and pressing problems.

Your thesis should be the last sentence of your introduction.
A Thesis has two parts
the *topic* and the *point*

1. *State the topic*
   - Kenya's culture .....................................has a rich and varied history
   - Building a model train set......................takes time and patience
   - Public transportation..............................can solve some of our city’s most persistent and pressing problems

2. *State the point*
What **NOT** to do

- Do not form your thesis as a question.
- Do not apologize.
- Do not announce your intentions
  *In this paper I will...*
  *The purpose of this essay is to...*
- Do not use a dictionary or encyclopedia definition
  *according to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary...*
- Don’t be too broad with the history-of-the-world approach
- Don’t ramble...get straight to the point.
Conclusions are Reflections
Conclusions Reflect on...

...the introduction
  – Come full circle; reflect on the topic and style of the introduction
  – Rephrase your thesis statement

...the body
  – Rephrase your topic sentences
  – Bring in any key points made in the body of the paper
The XYZ’s of writing conclusions

**explain the implications of research**

**Your Recommendations**

**Zoom in on main points**
Explain the implications of research

Make connections and come to conclusions

- Why is your topic important?
- What is your topic’s connect to the larger subject? What does it reveal about the subject?

Make your meaning clear. If you get stuck, ask yourself SO WHAT?
Your Recommendations

*Tie your information together*

Do not assume the reader knows what you mean.

- Based on the information in your paper, now what? *Should the reader take action?*
- What impact do you want to make on your reader?
Zoom in on main points

Highlight the main ideas

• Echo the main topic and subtopics you stressed?
• What do you want the reader to remember?
• How do you achieve your purpose?

Explain how you analyzed, compared, or argued your position.
What **NOT** to do

- Do not give an unnecessary summary of the body.
- Do not use clichés.
- Do not announce *In conclusion*...
- Do not try to fit in all information not included in the body.
- Do not *merely* repeat the thesis and main ideas.
For more information…

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