



The Writing Center

The Introductory Paragraph



Writing the introductory paragraph is often one of the trickiest parts of writing an essay. One reason for this difficulty is that writers have several jobs to do in the introduction: grab the reader's attention, introduce the topic and bring the reader into the conversation, and state the thesis. Although there is no set formula for writing a successful introduction, here are some suggestions to consider.

1. Grab the Reader's Attention

Here are some techniques to get the paper started. Remember, use a technique that is **ACTUALLY** interesting and not overused or cliché.

- Begin with a statistic
- Cite a relevant quotation
- Relate a personal anecdote
- Begin with a dramatic narrative
- Pose a provocative question
- Give an amazing or unusual fact
- Offer a bold opinion
- Use dialogue
- Start off by defining the problem

*PLEASE NOTE: Defining a term is not listed above. If a definition is used to start a paper, it must be interesting. Giving a dictionary definition does not usually interest the audience in reading further.

2. Introduce the Topic and Bring the Reader into the Conversation

This section is the "guts" of an introduction. Here the writer will introduce the specifics about the topic of the essay. Often times, writers will vaguely or loosely discuss related ideas to their topic; avoid this when possible. For example, when writing a paper about *Romeo and Juliet*, specific information should be given about the play that pertains to the particular topic of the essay and also the discussion going on about the particular take on the topic. **DO NOT** summarize what love is!

3. State the Thesis

The thesis statement sums up the paper's main idea in one or two sentences. It is recommended to write a preliminary thesis statement, which is an early version of the final thesis, to use as guide for the first draft. After writing the first two parts of an introduction, a writer may build on his preliminary thesis statement and use it as a final thesis statement. Remember that a thesis should be specific and should state the essay's topic as well as the opinion of the topic. For example, the thesis of a paper on *Romeo and Juliet* might sound like this: The actions of the protagonists in *Romeo and Juliet* reflect the two reoccurring themes love and sacrifice.