

Writing an Introduction

WHAT IS AN INTRODUCTION?

The introductory paragraph of an essay serves the purpose of drawing a reader into the substance of the argument that follows.

An effective introduction includes:

- an attention-grabber;
- necessary background information; and
- the thesis statement

Note: Different disciplines have different requirements of what constitutes an appropriate introduction. You should always consult your professor before beginning any writing assignment.

The Attention-grabber

Because the introductory paragraph is the first thing your readers will see, you want to be sure to grab their attention. Attention-grabbers can be a quote, an anecdote (story), a description, a rhetorical question, etc. No matter what choice you make, your goal is to hook your readers as soon as possible so they want to continue reading. The hook is also a fine way to establish the tone of your paper as well.

Background Information

Background information includes a brief summary of the context, relevance, or significance of your topic for an uninformed reader. Depending on the kind of paper you are writing, you might have to identify key people, places, define relevant terms, and/or establish a timeline. Be careful not to overload your introduction with too much information, as it will distract rather than clarify your purpose for writing.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is a one or two-sentence summary of the main argument made in the paper. Your thesis should clearly state one specific, debatable idea. In other words, your thesis is the focused argument you plan to support and develop throughout your essay.