



# Essay Introductions

## A-State Online Writing Center

### The role of an introduction

An introduction helps readers make the transition to your topic. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The opening paragraph of your paper will provide readers with their initial impressions of your argument, writing style, and overall quality of your work. A vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression. On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of you, your analytical skills, writing, and paper. Your goal is to engage the reader and motivate them to continue reading your paper.

The purpose of an introduction is to introduce a topic, justify its importance, and set up a discussion of the topic. You could say the introduction is a roadmap for your paper as it identifies the destination (your opinion) and explains how to get there (supporting arguments).

Ultimately, you want to create an introduction that helps your readers make a transition between their own world and the issues you will be discussing. You give your readers the tools they need to get into your topic and care about what you are saying.

Note that what constitutes a good introduction may vary widely based on the kind of paper you are writing and the academic discipline you are writing. If you are uncertain what kind of introduction is expected, ask your instructor.

### Writing a powerful introduction

- 1. Begin with a hook.** Start off on the right foot with your readers by making sure that the first sentence actually says something useful and that it does so in an interesting and polished way.

#### Four different approaches to consider:

- Fascinating fact
- Provocative quotation related to your argument
- Relatable personal anecdote
- A thoughtful question

**2. State your topic clearly.** What is your topic about? Why should your readers care?

**3. Provide relevant background information.** The information in this section should have a clear focus and be relevant to your argument. Be sure not to include too much information in your introduction paragraph, as you will leave nothing for your body paragraphs. The following list provides ways to include background information in your introduction paragraph:

- Definitions of key terms (these are terms that a person outside of your field may not be familiar with. Please do not define simple terms!)
- A summary of relevant theories that will come up in your paper
- Historical, geographical, or social context

**4. Don't forget your thesis statement.** Create a thesis statement that identifies your major point, claim, or argument. Clearly articulate your side or stance on the argument so that there's no question in the reader's mind where you stand on the topic.

**Your thesis should include**

- your specific topic
- your main point about that topic
- the points of discussion you will include in your paper

Your thesis should be clear and easy to find. Most often, it is the last sentence of the introduction.

## **Sample Introduction**

Canada is one of the best countries in the world to live in. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.

*Source: California State University at Northridge*

## **Works Consulted**

<https://wts.indiana.edu/writing-guides/paragraphs-and-topic-sentences.html>