

Writing Captivating Introductions



Why Are Good Introductions Important?

- They give the reader a first impression of your topic, writing style, and the overall quality of your work. A good introduction makes your readers want to keep reading.
- It forecasts the rest of your paper. It lets readers know what the main idea is, why your topic is important, and also the main points that you will discuss in your paper.

Elements of a Good Introduction

- An attention grabber, or “hook.” You want to grab your reader’s attention and draw them into the paper so that they will keep reading.
- Supporting or background sentences: These give the reader an idea of what your topic is, and also provides them with the necessary background information they will need to understand it.
- Your thesis statement: This is the main idea or argument of your entire paper.

Types of Attention Grabbers

Anecdote or Short Story	Question	Startling Fact	Quotation
Tell a short story. It can be real or imaginary, but still probable. Use your words to paint a mental picture of your topic and potentially	Ask an open-ended question that requires some thought. This should make the reader want to know your answer.	Give a startling fact or statistic. This can shock the reader and provoke further thought and discussion. Ex: According to a 2014 survey by the	Give a provocative quotation that is closely related to your topic. Ex: Author Brian Selznick writes, “I like to imagine that the world is

elicit emotion from the reader.

Ex: Lisa held the sealed envelope with shaking hands. Inside were the scores from her latest attempt at taking the SAT. If she had not scored at least a 1480, she had no chance of being admitted to her top choice of college. She took a deep breath, opened the envelope, and took out the score report. There, in bold, was her score: 1320. Lisa sobbed. She was a straight A student, captain of the volleyball team, a member of numerous honor societies, and volunteered at her church on a weekly basis. But this one test had crushed her dreams of ever attending Harvard.

Ex: Do we have control over technology, or does technology have control over us?

Commonwealth Fund, the average American spent over \$8,500 in medical care, more than citizens of any other wealthy country in the world. However, the United States also ranked last in terms of overall healthcare performance and equity.

one big machine. You know, machines never have any extra parts. They have the exact number and type of parts they need. So I figure if the entire world is a big machine, I have to be here for some reason. And that means you have to be here for some reason, too.”

Things to Avoid

- “Placeholder“ intros: Several vague sentences that don’t really say much, and are merely there to take up the introduction space of your paper.
 - Ex: Before the end of the Civil War, slavery existed in the southern United States. Slavery was bad and harmed many people in many different ways.
- Announcing what you are going to write about. Your thesis statement should answer the question of what you are writing about and why.
 - Ex: Today, I am going to write about American basketball player Michael Jordan.
- Summarizing the history of the universe: Making broad, sweeping claims about the relevance of your topic since the beginning of time. These are very general and often do not connect to your thesis.
 - Since the beginning of time, women have been seen as inferior to men.
- Dictionary definitions: Dictionary definitions can be boring and overused, and may not relate to the specific context of your paper. They also do not show that you have a deep understanding of the topic.
 - Webster’s Dictionary defines success as, “A degree or measure of succeeding.”
- Not including an introduction at all and just jumping into the body of your paper.

Resources

Antioch University Writing Center. *Tips for Effective Conclusions*. Antioch University, 2017, antioch.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Tips-for-Effective-Conclusions.pdf

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “Introductions.” *The Writing Center*, 2023, writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/introductions/