

Organization Introductions

Your introduction should create a contract, telling your audience what to expect and making a commitment about what you will do in your paper. When your introduction is interesting and its tone demonstrates that you are a credible author, your readers will most likely continue reading.

GENERAL FORMAT

USE THE FUNNEL FORMAT

Your introduction can be presented in a funnel format, beginning with broad ideas and narrowing to a specific point. First, it should include a statement that introduces the general subject and grabs your readers' attention. Then, it should logically lead readers to your thesis statement (a sentence that states the main idea and focus of your paper and indicates the general organization your paper will follow). At this stage, readers should have a clear idea of your paper's main idea.

TO GRAB THE READER'S ATTENTION, CONSIDER BEGINNING WITH . . .

- ◀ A question.
- ◀ An interesting statistic or fact.
- ◀ An analogy or comparison.
- ◀ A powerful quote.
- ◀ A story that demonstrates your central topic.
- ◀ A descriptive scene related to your paper's subject.

TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTIONS

ESTABLISH THE PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUR PAPER

Be sure your introduction is clear and relevant to your topic, so readers are not misguided about your paper's main focus. An effective introduction tells readers who your paper is directed to and why its subject is important to them. It may also give readers a feeling of the ongoing political, scholarly, or professional discussion surrounding the issue (the bigger picture).

ACHIEVE A BALANCE

Your introduction can be one to several paragraphs long, depending on your paper's length. Balance it to be proportional to the length of your paper.

TRY WRITING THE INTRODUCTION LAST

Many writers find it difficult to create an essay by beginning with the introduction. The best introductions often develop during and after writers have written a large portion of their papers.

AVOID . . .

- ◀ Clichés.
- ◀ Broad generalizations. ("Since the beginning of history . . .")
- ◀ Stating the obvious. ("Everyone wants to be loved . . .")
- ◀ Saying that you're going to say something. ("I will explain that . . .")
- ◀ Including anything that seems inappropriate for the purpose, audience, or subject of your paper.

*NOTE: The above suggestions are best suited for general essays. Keep in mind that your introduction should always be tailored to your specific assignment and audience.