



## The Learning Centre

### **Essay Writing Introductions**

An essay's **introduction** communicates the following information to the reader: the topic of the essay, the thesis statement, and the outline of the structure/content of the paper. A good introduction is important because it:

#### **1. Gives a Good First Impression**

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression. A vague, disorganized, error-filled, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression. On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will create a positive impression. With a positive impression, your readers will instill trust in you, your analytical skills, your writing, and your paper.

#### **2. Prepares the Reader**

Your introduction is an important road map for the rest of your paper. Remember: you are already familiar with your topic. Therefore, to you, the introduction may seem unnecessary or repetitive. However, your reader needs to familiarize him- or herself with your topic before settling into its substance. You can prepare the reader for the rest of your essay by informing them about your topic, its importance, and how you plan to proceed with your discussion. After reading your introduction, the reader should not have any major surprises in store when they read the body of your paper.

### **Starting Your Introduction**

Introductions can start in a variety of ways, depending on the content and thesis of the paper. Here are some examples of ways to start an introduction:

- ❖ An anecdote
- ❖ An introduction to the topic's importance
- ❖ Statistical data relevant to the thesis
- ❖ A quote from a primary source or subject authority
- ❖ Background information about the topic
- ❖ A controversy about the topic

One last suggestion...

Write your thesis statement, body, and conclusion first, and your introduction last. By the time you get to the end of your draft, you will have been thinking about your topic for quite a while and it is easier to create a good introduction at this point.



## The Learning Centre

### **Essay Writing Conclusions**

An essay's **conclusion** summarizes and evaluates the content and reinforces the major themes within the paper. Most importantly, it is often what the reader remembers best, so it is important to have a strong conclusion.

Here are some suggestions on ways to conclude your paper:

#### **Echo the Introduction/Thesis**

Echoing your introduction or thesis can be a good strategy if it is meant to bring the reader full-circle. Remember, however, that echoing is not the same as repeating. Instead of copying the introduction or thesis word-for-word, find a new way to say it. If you're having trouble finding a new way to say something, try this: in three different phrasings, rewrite the intro/thesis without looking at anything you've previously written. You can then combine the phrasings until you reach something that conveys your main argument without repeating what you've already written.

#### **Synthesize, Don't Summarize**

Don't simply repeat points that were in your paper – the reader has read them. Show the reader how the points you made and the pieces of supporting evidence you used were not random, but fit together. By demonstrating how your ideas work together, you can create new meaning. Often, the sum of the paper is worth more than its parts.

#### **Answer the Question, "So What?"**

Show the reader why this paper is important, meaningful, and useful. It may seem silly to have to explain this as the intent of your paper may seem obvious to you; nonetheless, the importance of the paper may not be as obvious to the reader as this may be the first time the reader is exposed to the topic. Therefore, he or she may need more guidance in identifying the purpose.

#### **Think Globally**

If your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general.

One last point...

Sometimes, you will reach your conclusion and discover that you need to slightly change your thesis statement. This is OK. It doesn't mean that you have to change your entire argument; instead, you can simply rework your thesis statement to make better sense of your evidence.