

Introductions

An effective introduction is a crucial part of any essay. The introductory paragraph informs the reader of the topic, content, and purpose of your essay without providing too much detail. It is intended to create interest in the reader's mind, as you move from general statements to increasingly specific ones leading up to your thesis statement. The six main goals of an introduction are to:

- introduce the topic
- establish its relevance
- outline your question
- state your thesis
- explain why your argument is important
- present the main points that you will use to support your thesis

Five Steps to Writing an Introduction

1. Begin by making a brief statement about your topic. This introduces the idea to the reader.
2. Put your topic in context and explain its relevance. Telling the reader the context of your essay will help them to orient them in that time, place, culture, etc. Stating why that topic is interesting, important, or puzzling will help the reader to understand why it matters. Think of writing a brief answer to the question “so what”?
3. State your position on the topic in question. In your introduction you must clarify not only what your topic is, but what argument you will be making about it.
4. Outline how you will try to answer the question or resolve the issue in your essay. This should reflect the structure of your body paragraphs in the rest of the essay. Remember, in your introduction you are establishing what you will do in your essay, but you are not actually doing it yet. You can outline the approach you will take to your argument or your main points, but do not present your evidence in the introduction.
5. State your thesis in your introduction. This makes your argument clear for your reader from the start. Typically, the thesis statement is located in the last line of your introductory paragraph. Be sure that your thesis statement is adequately supported by your evidence and sufficiently answers the questions that you are asking. Always refer back to your thesis statement and outline (or mapping scheme) as you write your essay.