

## Introductions And Conclusions

Introductions and conclusions vary according to the specific assignment and the writing conventions of your discipline. Make sure you are familiar with what your professor expects.

### Introductions

An introduction is an invitation to a reader to leave his/her house and enter yours. As such, it should introduce you as a writer (not literally) and the topic to be discussed. In introducing yourself, pay close attention to the tone you are setting. Do you sound defensive, hostile, rude...? Nobody is going to want to walk through that door. Do you sound persuasive, confident, knowledgeable...? That is the tone you want to set for the entire essay.

Since you are inviting a strange person into a presumably strange place, you must provide him/her with the information necessary to continue the journey.

An introduction should begin in a general manner and become more and more specific, culminating in the thesis statement.

**Hook:** To begin, you want to capture the reader's attention. The hook should be enticing.

#### Methods that are appropriate

1. An interesting example that provides insight into your topic.
2. A quotation from the text in question or an expert in the field related to your topic/argument.
3. A paradox within the text that leads to questions.

#### Methods to avoid

1. "Since the dawn of time..." This has become far too cliché. Also, it is not possible to follow your topic from 'the dawn of time' to the present.
2. "The dictionary says..." If you wish to open with a discussion of a term important to your essay, it is far more effective to provide your own definition.
3. "Everybody agrees / knows..." Really? Everybody? This is far too sweeping a generalization.
4. A repetition of the professor's exact wording of the assignment.
5. Stating your thesis as a question.

**General ideas:** The background information should be relevant to understanding the topic. Provide only enough to familiarize the reader with the situation leading up to the present enquiry.

Additional statements could lay out a roadmap for the essay. This should inform your reader of how you intend to proceed with your essay. It is also a chance to delineate what you will not be exploring in the essay – a chance to limit your topic.

**Thesis:** The thesis statement should come toward the end of the introduction. It should clarify your standpoint in the work to follow. (See the BU Writing Centre *Thesis Statements* handout.)

**Final note:** It is not an absolute requirement to write the introduction first.

Some find writing it first necessary to organize their thoughts and determine how to proceed. In this case, *a provisional introduction is a good idea*. If, through writing the essay, your focus changes, you can revise your introduction at the end.

Others find clarity through the actual writing of the essay. In this case, a provisional thesis will help you get started. The entire introduction can be written at the end.

## Conclusions

Just as the introduction is an invitation to the reader to leave his/her space and enter yours, the conclusion should provide your guest with a transition back to his/her world. It should illustrate exactly what he/she will be taking with him/her.

A conclusion reminds the reader of the most important points of the paper. It should also convince the reader that, through the body of the essay, you have proven those points. In an ideal situation, you will have, at least slightly, changed the reader's perception of the topic. You may use the conclusion to point out the broader implications of your work, suggest a course of action or a possibility for further research. Be careful of the following pitfalls.

### Methods to avoid

1. Summarizing instead of synthesizing. Summarizing simply repeats the thesis and main points of your paper. Synthesizing brings them into focus by showing how they relate to each other.
2. Announcing the purpose of the last paragraph: "In conclusion...", "In summary...", "To conclude...". It should be perfectly obvious to the reader that this paragraph is the conclusion.
3. Introducing a new argument or topic not covered in the paper.

**Final note:** It can be helpful to write both the conclusion and the final version of the introduction at this point. It will be easier to keep the connections clear in your mind.

References:

[Introductions – The Writing Center • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill \(unc.edu\)](#)

[Introductions and Conclusions | Writing Advice \(utoronto.ca\)](#)

