Writing an Introduction

The introduction sets the tone and direction of an essay. This paragraph is important because it introduces the topic, provides a hook to capture the reader’s interest, and states the thesis or author’s claim. Generally, there are three parts to an introduction.

1. Introductory Statement
2. Transition Statement
3. Thesis Statement

1. Introductory statement. This sentence, or sentences, introduces your topic. The best introductory statements provide a hook, or something that grabs the reader’s attention. Ways to create a hook:

   - State a surprising fact about the topic
   - Provide historical background about the topic
   - Present a contradiction, an opposing view, or common error about the topic
   - Describe the scene for the reader with the 5 Ws: who, what, when, where, why
   - Ask a rhetorical or provocative question, a question made to state a point rather than to get an answer
   - Share a fascinating anecdote, a brief story with a point, that is related to the topic
   - Use a popular quote, saying, or proverb that is related to the topic

2. Transition statement. After grabbing the reader’s attention, the next statement will give more information that shows how the topic is relevant to the paper. It provides more background that narrows the scope of the paper. Key terms or constructs that are necessary to improve or assist the reader’s understanding are defined here. This statement is the transition from the introductory statement, or hook, to the thesis. It can be more than one sentence.

3. Thesis statement. The thesis statement is the main claim and provides direction for the remainder of the essay. It is generally the last sentence of the introductory paragraph, but it may also be two sentences. The thesis is comprised of the topic, position (or opinion depending on type of essay), and normally, three reasonings.

Thesis = topic + position + reasoning X, reasoning Y, and reasoning Z.
Example of a thesis statement.

Owning a dog is better than owning a cat because dogs improve the owner’s mental health, have better temperaments, and require less care.

Another way to think of the introductory paragraph is to visualize an inverted pyramid or funnel. The top of the inverted pyramid is very broad, and each statement narrows the scope of the paper as you reach the bottom. The thesis will focus the remainder of your essay.

Example of an introduction paragraph.

Generally, there are hundreds of dog and cat breeds in the world. With so many options, it is a big decision to become a pet owner. Dogs and cats each possess different traits that need to be considered when choosing to own one. Owning a dog is better than owning a cat because dogs improve the owner’s mental health, have better temperaments, and require less care.
Using the above introduction paragraph information and thesis formula, one possible five paragraph essay outline is as follows:

1. Introduction (introductory statement(s)/hook, transition statement(s), thesis with X,Y, Z reasonings)
2. Main body paragraph: Reasoning X
3. Main body paragraph: Reasoning Y
4. Main body paragraph: Reasoning Z
5. Conclusion (rephrase the thesis)

Resources used in developing this handout:


The University of Arizona Global Campus. Introductions and conclusions. Retrieved October 20, 2021, from https://writingcenter.uagc.edu/introductions-conclusions