

Introductions



What does a successful introduction do?

Although in many ways the introduction is simply the first paragraph(s) of a piece of writing, it is crucial to the reader's ability to coherently follow any arguments or developments that follow. If its execution is not carefully attended to, your paper runs the risk of losing the reader at important points and thus reducing the strength of your argument. A good introduction grabs the reader's attention and sets the stage for the rest of the paper to hold that attention by outlining the steps the writer will take in the rest of the paper.

There is no one right way to write an introduction. The length and content of an introduction will change based on the type of writing you are doing. In a short analysis, for example, you may briefly state your thesis and provide a road map to how you will develop that thesis, so you can quickly move into the body of your analysis. If you were, instead, writing a lengthy research paper, you may provide historical background on your topic or an overview of the questions you asked yourself about your topic in order to ease your way into the body of your paper. In general, though, a good introduction prepares readers for what is to come in the paper and often gives readers a sense of why they should keep reading.

What are some useful strategies for writing a successful introduction?

Consider the following moves you can make in your introduction:

- **Context.** Introductions should situate the reader within the context of the paper, often by bringing in relevant information to move the reader from their own broader reality to the specific world of the paper or the topic that inhabits it. While readers will learn more about the topic and your own perspective on the topic in the body of the paper, the context you give them in the introduction will provide them with what they need to know in order to understand your perspective better.

Introductions

- **Argument.** By argument, we mean a set of statements that lead the reader to the point that the paper is trying to make, culminating in a succinct thesis statement.
- **Evidence/Examples.** A good argument is supported by deep or broad analysis, and is able to utilize source materials to provide evidence for the claims made in the argument. In the body of your essay, you can go into great detail about your evidence. In your introduction, you want to give readers an overview of the evidence you will use to support your argument.

Final thoughts.

At the risk of oversimplifying, the introduction in many ways serves as a miniature outline of the paper that it begins. It is a snapshot of the larger argument/exposition that will be made in small steps throughout the paper, and come together as a whole at by the piece's conclusion.