

Writing an Introduction

An introduction is important for stating the main idea of your paper and getting your reader's attention. It should be concise and to the point (save the specific details for your body paragraphs) and consists of an *opening*, *background information*, and a *thesis*.

Your ideas will likely evolve and develop as you write your first draft. For this reason, you might want to start with drafting your body paragraphs before you write your introduction.

Opening

Sometimes referred to as a "hook," the opening gives the reader their first impression of what the essay will be about.

Some ideas for openings are

- an anecdote;
- a relevant quote;
- a description of the background or context;
- a narrative or story;
- a dilemma/question that needs a solution;
- an interesting detail, fact, prediction, or statistic; or
- a figure of speech or play on words.

Not all of these will be appropriate for every paper. Choose one that works for you, and avoid being overly dramatic, overly obvious, irrelevant, or cliché.

Background Information

This section should give your reader enough information to understand your thesis. It's a foundation for the rest of your paper; however, you should avoid giving too much away. Leave your examples and details for the body of your essay.

Some information you might want to include is

- important names and events;
- the different sides of a debate;
- why the topic is relevant; and/or
- definitions of terms.

Depending on the paper, you may need more or less background information. Look at each sentence and ask yourself if it is necessary for understanding your thesis and paper.

Thesis

The thesis is the most important part of your introduction; it's what drives the rest of your paper. It's 1-3 sentences and should include

- your *specific* topic,
- your comment on that topic (argument),
- how you plan on making your argument, and
- why the argument is important/why you're writing about it.

When you are ready to refine your thesis, you can refer to CLAS's Thesis Statements handout for more guided assistance.