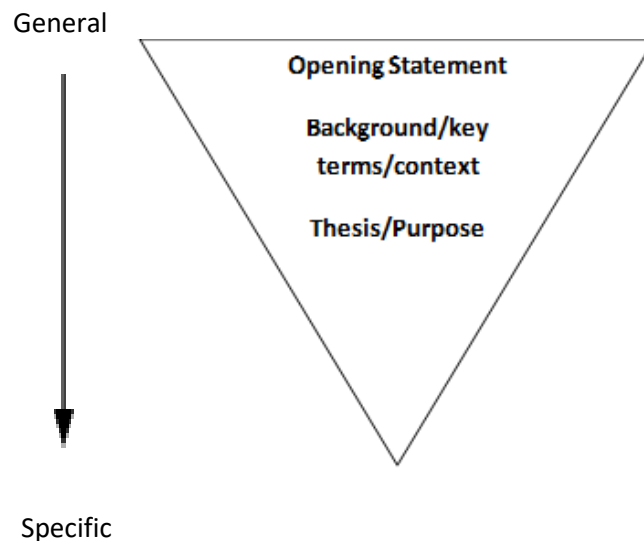


Writing Introductions

The introduction is a vital part of your paper. It introduces your topic and explains the thesis or purpose of your essay. Knowing how to get started can be difficult, so consider your purpose for writing (e.g., to inform? to persuade?) and your audience (are they knowledgeable about your topic? new to it?) when deciding what material to include in this paragraph. A well-organized essay requires a clear, specific introduction.

What an Introduction Does

- Moves from a general topic to a focused topic to a claim or purpose
- Presents your topic and thesis (or purpose, if your paper does not require a thesis) and informs the reader about the intention of your paper
- Gets the reader's attention and generates interest
- Provides background information and context for your discussion
- Shows the importance of your topic



You should craft your first paragraph carefully so that it lays the groundwork for the rest of the paper. A clear first paragraph will guide your reader when they arrive at the more complicated sections of your paper. Conversely, a weak or broad introduction is very difficult to recover from because it tends to confuse rather than clarify your main points. A strong introduction has three main parts.

- First, it should ease the reader into the paper by establishing the topic. The reader needs to be familiarized with the general topic at the beginning, so the rest of the paper makes sense. One useful strategy is to start the introduction with an uncontroversial claim (e.g., *COVID 19 has created the conditions in which people develop stress, anxiety, and related conditions*).

- Then, it should introduce a related issue, raise a question, or present a problem. This answers the question, *why am I writing this essay?* (e.g., *Has the Canadian government's response been appropriate?*).
- Finally, it should take a position on the issue (e.g., *A radical reaction like _____ should be adopted by the government because _____ /in order to _____*). This last part is most important because it is your **thesis statement** (see the CBU Writing Centre's handout on thesis statements for more information). If your paper does not require a thesis, your introduction should still contain a **purpose statement**, which indicates the goal or focus of the assignment without necessarily taking a particular stance on the topic (e.g., *The government's response to COVID-19 has included _____*). Whether your assignment requires a thesis or a purpose statement, your intention should be clearly and logically laid out in your introduction. The assignment instructions should indicate if you are required to take a position on a topic or if you are to inform readers about some aspect of it, but if you are unsure, clarify the requirements with your instructor to ensure you understand what you are being asked to do.

Strategies for Writing an Introduction

- Open with a quotation, fact, or statistic that clearly illustrates or relates to your topic
- Present a commonly held viewpoint and then argue against it or show how it is incomplete
- Pose a question and answer it with your thesis statement
- Define any key concepts and terms, especially if they have multiple or discipline-specific meanings
- Tell a story or anecdote to illustrate your topic and create interest
- Provide background information about the problem or situation to place your ideas in context
- Outline the major sections to come in the body of the paper
- Conduct a summary of what has been written on your topic and how your essay will add to it

Ensuring that your introduction accurately reflects the content of your essay is essential to your reader's understanding. Thus, sometimes it is easier to write the introductory paragraph last, once you have already completed your main body paragraphs. At this point in the writing process, you are likely to have a clearer idea of your overall argument or purpose than you would at the beginning. At the very least, the introduction should be edited and fine-tuned at the end of the writing process to account for any new ideas or changes in the direction of your paper.

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