

Introductions and Conclusions: An Overview

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Please Let me introduce Myself!

What does an introduction do? Well, it introduces! But what does it introduce?

It introduces the tone or voice of the essay. Will it be funny, serious, academic, casual, etc. It usually introduces the main point. Even though Essay One is a bit of a personal essay, you are making a point. You don't want to just ramble on and on for four pages about whatever pops into your head. You want some organizing idea! It also hooks the readers. You want to grab the readers' attention somehow. Otherwise, they might not keep reading!

BUT HOW DO I CATCH THE READERS' ATTENTION?

Good question! We'll look at this more in-depth in Unit Two, but generally, with an essay like this (which has elements of the personal essay,) You will likely want to start with a vivid SCENE showing us your word in action. Or, you may want to start with a QUESTION or a SURPRISING STATEMENT. Remember, the more the reader feels they are there with you, the more they will care with you! One way or the other, You will want to get to the main point pretty quickly. Readers will want to know why they are reading about this particular event. Why does it matter to them?

SOME DON'TS FOR INTROS:

- Don't explain what you're about to do: "In this paper, I will..." Just write!
- Don't repeat the assignment specifications from the assignment sheet. The assignment sheet is just a starting point for you to write a piece of your own.
- It's usually considered amateur to quote from the dictionary in an intro.

A HELPFUL DIAGRAM

(illustration of martini glass pictured)

It can be useful to think of an essay in the shape of a martini glass: the introduction grabs your reader and funnels them into the main body of your essay or article.

That is, they are there in the big wide world, and you are trying to get them to concentrate on something narrow (your point!) Your intro is the process of narrowing in on that point. The body of the text is the process of illustrating that point.

Conclusion

The conclusion is where you let your readers back out into the wide world

Once you've funneled your readers into your main point, and illustrated your point, you want to feed them back out into the world again, slightly changed by what they have learned from your essay. This is why the martini glass diagram opens out again. In the conclusion, the reader's perception of the world is broader because of what you've taught them!

Conclusion tips:

One great way to write a conclusion is to refer back to the story or question you brought up in your introduction, but this time add a little more insight that you have gotten from the information in your essay. Another option is to recommend a simple course of action-- something you want readers to do with the information you've given them in your essay. Some other ways to conclude essays are to suggest further research, or to warn against what might happen if the problem in the essay is not taken to heart (obviously, this doesn't always apply!)

Conclusion don'ts:

Honestly, there are no hard and fast rules for conclusions, but it is best if you: Don't start with "in conclusion," (or "in summary," etc. These are just cliché, and don't give us real info! Don't give new evidence. This should be in the body of the paper, not at the end. Don't restate your three main points (or five, or whatever) in the conclusion. You may have done this in high school and that's fine, but in college, you want to build on those skills and move on. If your paper is four pages long, I don't need it restated. I haven't forgotten! Instead, REPHRASE your main idea and help readers see it in a "bigger" way, now that you've provided all the evidence and analysis!

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- Before the intro, readers are thinking about the wide world, so you funnel them in to your point, using the intro!
- During the essay, readers are focusing on your narrow topic.
- In the conclusion, you let readers go, but... slightly changed. they are thinking differently about the world (and your topic, specifically) now.

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Remember, this is just an overview. We'll get more in detail about how to write intros and conclusions for specific genres of writing as we go. The basics are just that the introduction invites readers in, and the conclusion lets them go, slightly changed!