

## Introductions and Conclusions

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Introductions and conclusions play a special role in the essay, and they frequently demand much of your attention as a writer. A good **introduction** should identify your topic, provide essential context, and inform the reader what you will be discussing. It also needs to engage your readers' interest.

### **How do I write an interesting, effective introduction?**

Consider these strategies for capturing your readers' attention and for fleshing out your introduction:

1. Find a startling statistic that illustrates the seriousness of the problem you will address.
2. Quote an expert (but be sure to introduce him or her first).
3. Mention a common misperception that your thesis will argue *against*.
4. Give some background information necessary for understanding the essay.
5. Use a brief narrative or anecdote that exemplifies your reason for choosing the topic. In an assignment that encourages personal reflection, you may draw on your own experiences; in a research essay, the narrative may illustrate a common real-world scenario.

In fleshing out your introduction, you will want to avoid some common pitfalls:

1. Don't provide dictionary definitions, especially of words your audience already knows.
2. Don't repeat the assignment specifications using the teacher's wording.
3. Don't give details and in-depth explanations that really belong in your body paragraphs. You can usually postpone background material to the body of the essay.

A strong **conclusion** will provide a sense of closure to the essay while again placing your concepts in a somewhat wider context. It will also, in some instances, add a stimulus to further thought.

### **Some general advice about conclusions**

1. When summarizing your issue do so in fresh language. Remind the reader of how the evidence you've presented has contributed to your thesis/topic.
2. The conclusion, like much of the rest of the paper, involves critical thinking. Reflect upon the significance of what you've written. Try to convey some closing thoughts about the larger implications of your argument.
3. Broaden your focus a bit at the end of the essay. A good last sentence leaves your reader with something to think about, a concept in some way illuminated by what you've written in the paper.

### **How do I write an interesting, effective conclusion?**

The following strategies may help you move beyond merely summarizing the key points of your essay:

1. If your essay deals with a contemporary problem, warn readers of the possible consequences of not attending to the problem.
2. Recommend a specific course of action.
3. Use an apt quotation or expert opinion to lend authority to the conclusion you have reached.
4. Give a startling statistic, fact, or visual image to drive home the ultimate point of your paper.
5. If your discipline encourages personal reflection, illustrate your concluding point with a relevant narrative drawn from your own life experiences.
6. Return to an anecdote, example, or quotation that you introduced in your introduction, but add further insight that derives from the body of your essay.
7. In a science or social science paper, mention worthwhile avenues for future research on your topic.

Source: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/planning-and-organizing/intros-and-conclusions>