



INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions are the first impression your paper gives readers, therefore they need to grab the reader's attention while providing a framework for what will follow. The guidelines below offer some suggestions for creating a strong introduction.

YOUR INTRODUCTION MUST

Introduce your thesis. You don't have to give all your ideas away right at the beginning – in fact, it can sometimes be more effective to save your conclusive point till the end – but you must, at the very least, define the parameters of the question. What is it you plan to argue or prove in the paper?

Present relevant concepts and define key terms. E.g. a paper on love and passion in *Lolita* should begin with an explanation of the distinction between the two terms.

Know what you're trying to argue. Have a thesis. Write succinctly and specifically. Say what your argument is and what steps you're going to take to prove it.

TIPS FOR EXCELLENT INTRODUCTIONS

PROVIDE CONTEXT, BUT AVOID GENERALIZATIONS	GOOD: Recent media attention to the murders of Megan Kanka and Jon Benet Ramsey has heightened public awareness about child sexual abuse. Thus, the controversy over the new film version of <i>Lolita</i> has proved timely. TOO GENERAL: In society, child sexual abuse has always been an important moral issue.
USE CREATIVE WRITING TECHNIQUES	Describe a particularly pertinent scene or situation from the text, emphasizing themes, images, etc. that will support your point. Be careful with this strategy. You rarely get mediocre results: your intro will turn out to be either splendid or abysmal. Also, consider the discipline you are writing in. Creative writing techniques work well in personal statements, but not in scientific writing.
USE A KEY QUOTATION	This does not have to be from the text on which you are writing. Cite it, unpack it, explain why it is relevant, and use it to formulate your thesis. Be sure the quotation is central to your argument and avoid cliches (e.g. "Love is blind").
HOOK YOUR READER	Readers get hooked when they feel like something is at stake, that the only way to find an answer to something that is important to them is to finish your paper. Think about what is important to your readers – what do they want to read about? Consider connecting your idea to a controversy, a recent news story, or a historical event, something that connects your paper to “the big picture.”

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