The IUP Writing Center
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WRITING GREAT INTRODUCTIONS

The beginning of a piece of writing has one purpose: to grab the reader's attention and inspire him or her to read further.

Writing introductions can be one of the most difficult challenges for many students because many people spend much time thinking of a good way to hold the readers' attention at the very beginning.

- You may have been told at some point that good introductions summarize the major points you're wishing to make in your paper; this is indeed one powerful strategy. However, don't limit yourself. If you think about the pieces of writing which grabbed you, you'll probably find that few if any have begun with a dry enumeration of the paper's contents.

- Remember that many kinds of writing have genre conventions that dictate how the paper should start. Check with your instructor if you suspect that he or she will be expecting to see certain information in your opening.

Here are some commonly used strategies whereby writers generate anticipation and interest at the outset:

1. Tell a brief anecdote that bears on your argument or that raises the issues you're about to discuss. Everyone everywhere loves to read or listen to stories.

2. Start with a pithy quotation and discuss what it means for the paper you're writing.

3. Lay out the problem or issue you're addressing by summarizing its history.

4. Begin with a question—the central, underlying question which drives your essay ("What were the causes of the Civil War?" "How can Jungian analysis help survivors of trauma?" "Was Hamlet really in love with his mother?"). The remainder of the paper will answer this question, and a one-sentence answer you provide at some point will be your thesis.

5. Present some vivid description of a person, place, or thing. Next to stories, people love imagery.

6. Commence with a short story or example which elaborates on your main point. Then, throughout your paper, draw upon that story to enunciate your main points. (e.g. A sad story about a drunk driving accident could begin your argument paper about creating harsher penalities for driving under the influence).

7. Open with a strong opinion. Yes, it's OK to present your argument straight off – in strong terms. Use this strategy when you wish to create a sense of urgency.

To write an effective introduction it is important to know the three most important parts:

The Parts of an Introduction

- Hook
- Comments, and background
- Thesis Statement

For Example

- Example topic: "The high cost of living in Tokyo"
- Hook: Can you imagine how much a single day can cost if you live in Shibuya, Tokyo?
- Comments and background: Tokyo is one of the most expensive cities in the world. The prices of things in Tokyo are much higher than in other parts of Japan. Many people living in Tokyo have a difficult time paying for their lifestyles.
- Thesis Statement: Tokyo definitely is one of the most expensive cities for many reasons.

You get the idea. Use your creativity and energy to set the stage for the paper in an exciting, attention-grabbing way. There are lots of ways to do this, and the above strategies are just a few time-honored ones.

Always proofread, revise, and, when possible, sit down with a tutor and talk about your writing.