

Introductions

Every essay must begin with an introduction that grabs the reader's attention and sets the tone for the essay.

ALERT. DANGER AHEAD. PROCEED WITH CAUTION.

- DO NOT present any evidence or arguments to support your thesis in your introductory paragraph.
- DO NOT list the points you plan to discuss in your essay.
- If it's not on this list, then it is not an acceptable hook for your introduction.

The following are NOT acceptable:

- Telling the reader to do something: "Imagine you are a princess..."
- Using a fix-it in your hook: "The feeling you get when your girlfriend dumps you is terrible."
- Using any type of hook that is NOT LISTED on this sheet. Ask your teacher if you have questions.

1. The Hook (attention-getters)

▪ Rhetorical Question

Many try this method, but few do it well. If you want to tackle this type of hook, be sure to follow the guidelines below. A poorly-constructed rhetorical question will hurt your intro.

A rhetorical question IS...	A rhetorical questions IS NOT...
✓ a creative, thought-provoking, interesting question meant to engage your reader	✗ a question that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no"
✓ challenging because there should not be a clear answer	✗ the question your essay addresses (e.g., if your essay is about whether or not Jay Gatsby is a hero, your rhetorical question cannot be "What makes Gatsby a hero?")
✓ something your reader might not have considered before you asked it	✗ easy to write!

▪ Pertinent Quotation

This is another favorite type of hook. The internet makes finding quotes on any topic REALLY easy. However, heading over to Brainy Quote for a topical (but unverified) quote is NOT acceptable. Be sure to follow these guidelines:

Acceptable	Unacceptable
✓ quoted and cited from the original source	✗ quoted from an online quotation page (e.g., Brainy Quote or Quotations Page)
✓ cited in-text and on your Works Cited page	✗ not cited, or only cited in-text
✓ a quote from an important authority or famous personality OR a fragment from a poem or piece of prose that is relevant to your thesis	✗ a random quote by someone that you read on the internet OR an anonymous quote that you cannot trace or verify
✓ properly introduced GOOD: Former slave and noted abolitionist Frederick Douglass stated, "Education...means emancipation. It means light and liberty. It means the uplifting of the soul of man into the glorious light of truth, the light by which men can only be made free" (Douglass 87).	✗ not introduced NOT ACCEPTABLE: "Education...means the uplifting of the soul of man into the glorious light of truth, the light by which men can only be made free." –Frederick Douglass

▪ Narrative/Anecdote

A short, interesting story (2-3 sent.) that leads into your bridge/thesis. This could be a story about yourself or the topic at hand. It should be creative, have voice, and engage the reader's interest.

- **Cause-Effect or Problem-Solution**

If your essay will discuss the effects of a situation, you can describe the situation in your introduction. Alternately, if your essay will discuss the causes of a situation, your introduction can describe the effects. You must be careful not to provide evidence with this type of introduction, but if you write it well it can be powerful and highly effective.

- **Definition**

If you are dealing with a topic in which the exact meaning may be vague or easily confused, it is helpful to present the definition of terms as a hook. **Avoid defining a term that your audience most likely already knows.** They might find your introduction boring, or even worse, insulting! That will have the opposite effect that an introduction should have.

- **Illustration**

While you may not provide evidence in your introduction, you can provide an example of illustration that you will **not** use in your essay.

- **Statement of Opposing View**

An unusual technique for creating interest in a topic is to build up one side of a discussion or argument for the express purpose of having the thesis change to a contrasting view. While this type of introduction can be effective, be sure to avoid overstatements like “No one believes...”; instead use limiting words like “Some people believe that...”

- **Comparison or Contrast**

In this type of introduction, the author either compares or contrasts a situation or idea to another situation or idea. For example, the author could use references to real or fictional people, events, or situations. Different techniques to compare or contrast could include allusions, similes, metaphors, or analogies.

- **Startling Statistic**

If your essay is on a topic of current interest, provide shocking or surprising information to grab your reader's attention. Remember to give credit to your source! Your statistic must be real and it must be meaningful.

2. The Bridge

The bridge is the part of your introductory paragraph that takes the reader from your attention getter to your thesis statement.

Check out the bridge on this **statement of opposing view** introduction (in italics):

Some people might say that Little Chuck Little is no gentleman. *They would consider his lack of shoes horrifying. They would express disdain at his less than fancy attire. They would judge his colloquial speech as an indication of a lack of class. However, these minor issues are simply distractions.* In truth, Little Chuck Little is quite a gentleman.

The attention getter states an idea contrary to the thesis statement, but the bridge builds a connection between the two ideas.

3. The Thesis

See class materials for THESIS STATEMENTS to review expectations.

Conclusions

Every essay must end with a conclusion that brings the essay to a satisfying close. Just as your paper needs to begin with an interesting introductory paragraph, it needs to end with an effective conclusion. Which type of conclusion will work best can depend on the type of paper you are writing. Use the tips below to write an effective conclusion.

NOTE: Your conclusion should be roughly the same length as your introduction. Since you are not providing evidence and arguments to support your thesis, it should not be as long as a body paragraph.

Method 1: Bow Tie or Hour Glass

In this method, the introduction and conclusion are paired so that the introduction moves from a general or broad idea (the hook) to a narrow or specific idea (your thesis). The conclusion paragraph then reverses the order, beginning with the specific (thesis) and ending with the general. You can connect to why the ideas were important to society, important to the author, or important to any potential reader (remember not to use “you”).

INTRODUCTION

1. General (but not boring) and thought-provoking hook. The statement is general because it has not yet begun to talk about the book. Facts, statistics, and quotations all work well here.
2. Build on your general statement or observation.
3. Begin to narrow your focus with a more specific statement.
4. Tie the above statement (3) to your topic (novel).
5. Thesis Statement (If title and author are in the previous sentence, it might be less redundant to leave the title and/or author out of this sentence.)

CONCLUSION

1. Restatement of thesis (do not have to use the author and title again unless you want to).
2. A reflection.
3. Sum up your points from the body of your essay.
4. Relate your points to the novel in some way.
5. A clincher to “bring it home.”



Introduction goes from broad/general to narrow (thesis).



Conclusion goes from narrow (thesis) to broad/general.

Bow Tie/Hour Glass Introduction Example from *A Separate Peace*:

1. War wounds cannot always be seen by the naked eye. 2. People with perfectly unscarred bodies can harbor internal wounds that emanate from battles they have waged within themselves. 3. Guilt, pride, jealousy, fear, hatred, and other negative forces in life can attack a person and leaving one shell-shocked and bleeding. 4. Protagonist Gene Forrester of John Knowles novel *A Separate Peace* stands as an example of someone suffering from a mental and emotional blitzkrieg. 5. In *A Separate Peace*, Knowles shows that people can isolate themselves from the physical war around them, but they cannot escape the battles within themselves.

Bow Tie/Hour Glass Conclusion Example from *A Separate Peace*:

1. Even if a person is able to evade physical war, it is impossible to dodge the spiritual and emotional battles one might fight inside one’s soul. 2. As a person lives, these internal battles spring up to wage war. 3. One can summon troops, stand and fight along, or even make a choice to succumb to the enemy, but one cannot run away from the battle for too long. 4. Eventually, as evidenced by the characters of Finny, Gene, and Brinker, one must choose a way to wade through the bogs of the soul in the hopes of finding peace. 5. For most of the characters in the book a peace was found – “a separate peace” for each of them.

Method 2: Bookending

Invoke the hook that you used in your introduction to bring your paper full circle. Explain why the ideas in your paper made your introduction more meaningful. This type of introduction is effective since, by ending where you started, your reader will have a sense of closure. It conveys that your essay is well planned and cohesive from beginning to end.

Bookending Introduction Example from *Jane Eyre*:

What happens when the real meets the unbelievable, when life as we know it is blended with fairytales? Cinderella in athletic shoes? No. That would be absurd...and yet, it is not absurd when two opposites – the realistic and the romantic – mingle in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. Brontë uses the contrast between these two elements in the story of the love between Edward Rochester and the title character to make a point: life can be real even as love is seemingly unreal.

Bookending Conclusion Example from *Jane Eyre*:

So what happens when the real meets the unbelievable? Brontë might argue that realism and romanticism are not always opposing forces. The harsh realities of real life and the idealism of fairytales blend together quite naturally. This is why audiences enjoy a good rags-to-riches story and why so many bestsellers are memoirs that reveal how a person overcomes great difficulty to find his/her happy ending. Even in real life, the experience of love often seems as unbelievable as the love story of Rochester and Jane.

Method 3: Chronological

Sometimes, your paper will follow a chronology or narrative. In this case, a natural way to end your paper is with the resolution to the story you are telling. Present the resolution of the story, the ways in which the story has made a change, and/or why the change is important. NOTE: A narrative introduction can begin a story completed in a chronological conclusion.

MISTAKES TO AVOID:

You will want to avoid these common pitfalls in your introduction:

- Just as you should not provide information or evidence in your introduction, you should not include new information or arguments in your conclusion. **Your essay should present your complete argument, so throwing in new ideas at the end can imply that your paper was not comprehensive.**
- Also, avoid statements like "These were just a few reasons why..." Again, **you do not want to imply that your paper left out information your reader might want to know.**
- Avoid a conclusion that simply repeats your introduction or summarizes the ideas in your paper. **Your conclusion needs to be interesting and insightful.**

Special Note for Timed Writings

In many ways, timed writings are different from process papers. While you should strive to include a complete, effective, thoughtful conclusion in a timed writing, you might find yourself racing the clock. In a case where you must end your paper quickly, it is better to end your paper with some conclusion than with no conclusion. In a case where you have just a moment to end a paper, close it with a "concluding statement" rather than a full concluding paragraph. Use a transition word or phrase and restate your thesis idea. The same rules apply—no new ideas, no "these are just a few reasons why..."—but this way your paper will have a clear concluding idea instead of nothing.

NOTE: This is not an effective option for process papers.