

Introductions

Think of your essay as a self-contained world into which you have invited your reader. A good introduction will orient the reader to this world, give him/her a clear idea how it works, and anticipate what s/he will find there.

An introduction helps your audience to contextualise (the meaning of) the information to be provided in your essay by describing its structure (This also applies to presentations). An introduction should explain to the reader:

1. **What** information you will present?
2. **How** you will present the information?
3. **Why** you will present it this way?

If the reader understands the way in which you have presented the information, s/he will be:

1. More willing to **read it**
2. Better able to **understand it**
3. Better able to **remember the information given** and **the conclusions reached**

Four questions to be answered in an Introduction:

1. What is the precise subject (thesis) to be addressed?
2. What is your objective (Why are you providing this information and/or making this argument)?
3. What is the relevant background to the topic?
4. What is the organisational structure of the essay?

Writing an introduction

You could begin with:

- a quotation – *but be sure to explain its relevance*
- an interesting question – *but be sure that you answer it*
- an opinion opposite to the one you plan to take – *but take it seriously and don't be condescending*
- a short narrative or anecdote about someone – *but be sure that it is relevant to your essay and refer back to it later – perhaps in your Conclusion*
- an interesting fact – *but be sure to explain its relevance to the topic and/or to the objective of your essay*
- the definition or explanation of a relevant term – *but be sure that it provides interesting/relevant information*
- an irony or an apparent paradox – *but be sure to resolve it in your essay*
- an analogy – *but be sure that it is original and not too far-fetched*
- an apparently unrelated situation with which the reader is familiar – *but be sure that you promptly and clearly demonstrate its relevance to your topic or objective*

Conclusions

A good conclusion helps the reader to **remember the main facts** presented in the essay **and to understand their implications** (what the facts or analysis *mean*)

Think of your conclusion as *an Introduction in reverse*; your Introduction brought the reader *into* your essay; after your 'tour', the conclusion should return them to the world with a new understanding. What new knowledge or understanding do you want the reader to take back with them into the world – **AND how can they use this?**

A Conclusion must:

1. Remind the reader of the main facts and evidence and then summarises the main arguments presented
2. Answer any questions raised in the introduction
3. Explain where to find additional information

A Conclusion *may* also:

- Emphasise the reason that the subject is important
- Pose a question that prompts the reader to consider the subject from a new perspective
- Offer an anecdote that dramatises the main point of the essay
- Include a quote that supports your analysis or finding(s)
- Offer your speculations about what might happen next
- Propose a solution or recommendation for what should be done
- Call for further research into a particular area of the topic

Revising your draught

Review your draught & answer the following questions:

- Do you clearly understand the purpose or objective of this essay/dissertation? (Without looking at the text, could you explain your objective in one clear sentence?)
- Does your title help readers to understand/anticipate the kind of information or the kind of argument that will be presented in this essay/dissertation?
- Is your thesis (what you intend to achieve or accomplish in this essay/dissertation) clearly stated?
- Why would someone want to read this essay/dissertation? What **useful** information will they get from it?
- Does your introduction establish the importance of the thesis or question? By the end of the introduction, is it clear to the reader what kind of information or content follows? Have you fulfilled these expectations?
- Does your argument progress in an organized, logical way that helps the reader understand the connections?
- Do your paragraphs have **Topic Sentences, Unity, Coherence** and **Adequate Development**?
- Are your paragraphs too short (fewer than 4 sentences) or too long (longer than 8)? (Paragraphs should be 75-125 words in length)

- Do you need to combine or separate any ideas, topics, issues, descriptions, or explanations?
- Does the order/sequence of paragraphs make sense? Should any paragraph be moved to another section?
- Does the essay fulfil the ILOs for the assignment?
- Have you identified and defined all of the key terms the reader needs to know and understand? (Have you established – and maintained – *Common Code* so that the reader will understand what you mean?)
- Are your examples and figures relevant, clear and convincing? Are there enough of them (or are there too many) to develop the main idea of the paragraph?
- Do you need any additional content (facts, theories, evidence)? If so, what information do you need?
- Is there any unnecessary content (information which is irrelevant for your stated purpose or objective)?
- Is it clear where your Introduction ends and the body of the essay begins, and where the body of the essay ends and the Conclusion begins?
- Does the essay (the sections & the content provided within these) maintain a focus on your central thesis? Does it fulfil the 'promise' in the thesis statement?
- Have you explained & supported all of your assertions and your interpretation of the facts you have provided?

- Is there a balance between your own insights and (correctly cited and attributed) expert opinions?
- Is there any content that must be referenced?
- Are all sources and direct quotations **adequately explained** and correctly attributed?

When you quote from sources, remember that, while you have read the original text (book, chapter or article) from which you have drawn the quote, and so understand the quote based on the context provided by the author, your reader has not. It is your responsibility to explain the meaning and/or implications of quoted passages are adequately to your reader.

- Have you cut anything that goes off topic or is not essential to your thesis? (TIP: whenever you cut something out of your draught, paste it in a separate file in case you need it)
- Does the conclusion address the issue(s) and/or answer the question(s) raised in your introduction?
- Have you spell-checked **AND PROOFREAD** (because **spell-checke** won't catch errors of diction) the text to ensure that there are no basic errors?
- Have you ensured that your List of References (not *Bibliography*) is complete **and** correctly formatted?