



Writing a Strong Introduction

The beginning of a piece of writing has one purpose: to interest the reader and prompt him or her to continue reading.

Writing an introduction can be one of the most difficult challenges because it's important to hold the reader's attention from the very beginning.

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

1. A clear, effective opening sentence (hook)
2. A good indication of what your paper is about, moving from a general topic to a specific one (think of a "funnel")
3. A strong thesis statement that presents a claim (try to avoid a three-pronged thesis statement)

*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 one strategy. However, it is not the *only* way. If you think about the pieces of writing that have interested you, you'll probably find that few, if any, have begun with a dry listing of the paper's contents.

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

Commonly Used Strategies Writers Use to Generate Interest:

1. Preview the problem or issue in several sentences. End the paragraph with your thesis statement.
2. In your first paragraph, build up to 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?," or "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 (or the “claim”).

3. Open with a strong opinion. Sometimes it’s good to present your argument straight off. Use this strategy when you wish to create a sense of urgency.
4. 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 penalties for driving under the influence).

As an example, we’ll break down a sample introduction to see how it interests the reader and provides a strong thesis statement.

Sample Introduction:

Can you imagine how much a single day can cost if you live in Shibuya, Tokyo? For instance, a simple outing to the movies would cost a couple \$46, while the same pair of movie tickets would cost just \$26.50 in New York City, which is often considered one of the most overpriced cities in the U.S. However, the cost of living in Tokyo is much higher than the U.S. and even other parts of Japan. Because of the high cost of living, many people living in the city struggle to pay for their lifestyles. This phenomenon is likely due to three major factors: the strength of the yen against the dollar, skyrocketing prices of real estate on a land space smaller than California, and inefficient government practices.

Let’s break down this introduction:

1. **The topic:** Readers learn nearly that every topic will be about the high cost of living in Tokyo.
2. **Opening sentences:** The introduction starts with a general rhetorical question and provides an interesting fact meant to illustrate the question.
3. **Indication of what the paper is about:** The introduction states the main idea: the cost of living in Tokyo is higher than the rest of Japan and much of the world

4. **Strong thesis statement:** Readers learn there are three concrete reasons for the high costs and can expect the rest of the paper to explore these ideas.

**Remember: First impressions count for a lot, so make a good one!
Always proofread, revise, and when possible, sit down with a tutor
and talk about your writing.**