

Writing Introductory Paragraphs:

The trick with writing introductory paragraphs is to try to do one or more of the following:

1. **“Hook” the reader.** This basically means to grab the reader’s attention with something interesting, surprising, or otherwise likely to make the reader want to read the rest of your essay.
2. **Provide Context.** Your reader might not know what your topic even is, or may not know enough about the background of your topic to be able to understand what you’ve written about. If you think that your audience needs some background information, it’s best to ease your reader into the topic starting here. You can also add interesting historical facts if they can function as a “hook” (see #1 above).
3. **Raise the issue.** If you’re writing an essay that is arguing one or another particular point of view, for or against a particular issue, you’re going to have to bring up the issue sooner or later. You might even need to convince your readers that there *is* a problem! Sometimes, bringing it up strongly in your introduction is the best way to start.
4. **State Your Opinion.** An introductory paragraph **MUST** have a thesis statement for the whole essay.
5. **Give the Reader a Map.** You don’t want to explain your whole argument, but you should give the reader a general sense of what to expect in your paper – your main arguments, or topics of explanation.

It’s extremely important to consider your audience when you are writing the introduction to your essay. If you write for the wrong audience – assuming they know too much, or too little – or if you approach the subject in a way that won’t interest them, then you’re likely to fail to get your reader to read the rest of the essay.

Writing Conclusions

The key to a good conclusion is that you have a reason for writing the conclusion. Yes, you’re supposed to reinforce what you’ve described or argued above, and yes, most books tell you that a summary is important at this point. But **ONLY** summarizing your essay is not worthwhile for the reader. Therefore, it’s important to really deliver something “more” in your conclusion.

1. **Refocus.** If you’ve written an essay about recycling plastic, well, what about the recycling of other materials, like paper, aluminium, and glass? Showing us the other cans of worms that could be opened up later.
2. **Other Possibilities.** If you’ve spent time arguing that one solution to a problem is best, it doesn’t hurt to note that other possibilities exist, but be careful not to introduce doubt that your solution is at least a good one.
3. **The Unknowns.** There is always more to learn, more to explore. Problems that you cannot solve, or maybe nobody can solve right now, are often worth mentioning. They give the reader something to think about, and will encourage others to study and write about the same subject in a new way later on.
4. **Reinforce Your Opinion.** Don’t just copy and paste your thesis sentence from the introductory paragraph. That’s a bad idea, but restating your thesis and noting how well-supported it is by all the evidence you’ve presented is **ALWAYS** a good idea.

And now: an exercise. Turn over the back of the paper, and do the following:

- (A) Find the topic sentences for each of the paragraphs.
- (B) Write a thesis statement for the essay.
- (C) Write an introductory and closing paragraph for this essay in your notebook.

One bad thing about television is that it gives children a short attention span. The average length of a segment on television – the amount of program between commercial advertisements – is less than 5 minutes, and studies show that scenes within each segment of a program are getting shorter every decade. The result is widely known: people who grew up watching television have much shorter attention spans than people who grew up reading books or engaged in outdoor activities like hunting and playing sports. This often translates to bad grades in school and poor performance on tasks requiring attention and careful thought, as well as a lower likelihood of reading books and developing vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and other skills crucial to professional work.

Another bad effect of television is the exposure to advertising that children get from it. North American youths under the age of twelve see an average of 100 hours of advertising a month! Some of this advertising targets them directly, which is one reason why so many children are excited about brand names and products that their parents try hard to avoid, such as McDonald's or Barbie dolls. Parents suddenly find that their kids are growing to become voracious consumers. Their kids are care about brand names and about shopping in a way that they seem to have learned from nobody. However, the truth is that they learned it from television.

A final danger of television is its effect on health. It's universal that mothers warn their kids not to sit too close to the TV, because too much close exposure to the screen is bad for your eyes. It turns out that everyone's mother is correct: studies show that prolonged exposure to television is *very* bad for your eyes! But even worse is the effect TV has on childrens' energy level and activeness. Kids who watch 10 or more hours of TV a week are, on average, also 5-10 pounds heavier than kids who aren't allowed to watch TV at all. This is because kids who watch TV spend a lot of time just sitting in one place, instead moving, playing, and running actively like kids are supposed to do. Even worse, kids who spend too much time inside watching TV have weaker immune systems and a much higher chance of getting sick than kids who spend their free time outdoors.