

What Makes a Good Introduction?

Some writers struggle with how to start, when to start, and what should be in an introduction.

Questions may include:

- How will the introduction convince the reader to keep reading?
- Is there anything interesting I can share that nobody knows? How can I know what that something is?

The purpose of any paper—whether it is history, literary criticism, or biology—is to persuade the reader of my opinion on the subject.

- How do I do that?
- Are there certain words I need to say?
- Does any of this make sense to me right now?

What are the key elements?

- The hook
- The thesis statement (not a question—but the answer to the question posed)
- A brief outline

How can I hook the reader?

- Pose a specific, provocative question. For example, “Should the canon of great literature include works by homosexual authors?” The assignment sheet can give you ideas about what the professor expects.
- Provide a quote related to the topic from a relevant author, one you find interesting.
- Give a general overview of the history of the topic—as you understand it.
- State a statistic that surprised you and challenged your preconceived ideas of the topic. If it surprised you, it may also surprise your readers.
- Tell a short story related to the topic, an anecdote you found interesting as you did your research.
- Personalize the subject by sharing how you relate to the topic. Vivid details help your reader relate to you and to your topic.

TIP: Saving the Introduction to write last can help you better introduce the paper you’ve actually written.