

A Guide for Writing Introduction Paragraphs for Academic Essays

This guide will cover the following information to help you create introduction paragraphs for academic essays:

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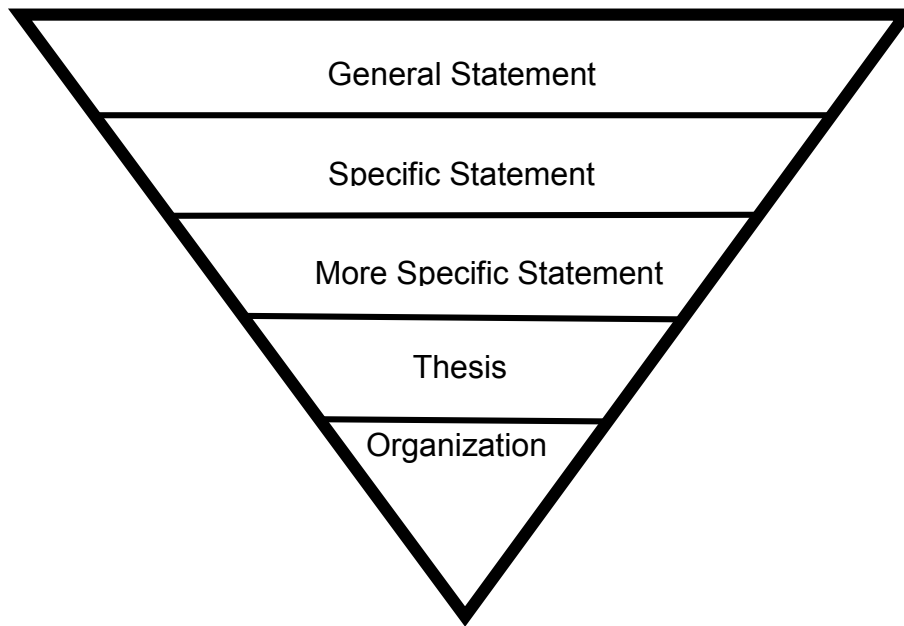
WHAT IS AN INTRODUCTION? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The introduction paragraph is the first paragraph in the paper. This paragraph presents the thesis of the paper – the main claim or assertion the author is making through the presentation of supporting information. In addition, this paragraph establishes the context of the paper (Davis, Davis, Stewart, & Bullock (2013)¹. This context should be presented in a manner that is neither so broad that it includes irrelevant information not presented in the body, nor so specific that it goes into too much detail about the information discussed in the body. This paragraph is essential for clear and organized writing. By providing an appropriate context and an effective thesis sentence, the introduction allows the writer to narrow the scope of their paper and helps with ensuring all information and claims relate back to the thesis. Some strategies for creating introductions are discussed below.

THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF AN INTRODUCTION

There are many models for how introduction paragraphs should be written, what they should include, and their specific formatting. If in doubt about the exact format and/or contents, refer to the professor's specific preferences. However, when writing for academic purposes, the inverted triangle model is the most frequently used structure (see diagram on page 2). This method presents the introduction in a deductive structure (general to specific) (Davis et al., 2013).

¹. Davis, R., Davis, L. K., Stewart, K. L., Bullock, C. J. (2013). *Essay writing for Canadian students with readings* (7th ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson.



THE INTRODUCTION'S DIFFERENT COMPONENTS

General Statement The general statement is intended to be a broad (but not overly broad) statement that introduces the general paper topic.

Specific and More Specific Statements These start providing the reader with essential background information required to understand your paper topic and the general context in which your paper fits. Introduce only some of the essential information without going into too much detail, as that is the purpose of the paper's body. If applicable to the assignment or purpose of writing, it can be a good idea to use this section to establish a problem that your paper will address.

Thesis Broadly defined, the paper's thesis is your assertion. It is the main claim you are making that will be supported in the body of your paper. The exact format and characteristics of the thesis will vary depending on the type of paper you are writing. Davis *et al.* (2013) explain that thesis statements are tailored to specific types of writing, including persuasive, research, argumentative, and analysis papers. When writing the paper, use the thesis statement to check that the content in the paper's body is developing the assertion you made.

Paper Organization The last section of the introduction paragraph should outline how your paper is organized. While this element may be omitted depending on the nature and length of the paper, it is especially useful when writing larger, more complex papers that include multiple sections. This provides the reader with a general idea of how the paper is laid out and the topics that will be discussed. Combined with the use of effective topic sentences in the paper's body, this part of the introduction contributes to the paper's overall organization and clarity.

FAQS AND TIPS FROM PEER TUTORS

Approximately how long should the introduction paragraph be?

As a general guide, the introduction can range from approximately half a page to one page depending on the length and complexity of the paper.

Can I cite sources in my introduction?

In accordance with UFV's Policy 70, any information that is not the writer's original thought or common knowledge must be cited. If the introduction includes information that fits these criteria, particularly when presenting the relevant information establishing the paper's context, citations need to be included.

Do I need to use a catchy hook or ask a question to my reader?

Generally, a hook can be a good way to gain the reader's attention, and some professors may require them. However, keep in mind the overall tone and form of the paper. An overly casual hook can diminish the authorial credibility. For example, replace "Have you ever wondered why people develop cancer?" with "Habits and materials used on a daily basis can lead to individuals potentially developing cancer." Generally, questions and lengthy quotations should be avoided. The paper's objective is to inform the reader, not ask questions. However, these elements may be used depending on the paper.

Can I write my introduction last, after I write the paper's core body content?

Often it can be difficult to write the introduction paragraph first. Davis *et al.* (2013) explained that in this event, writers can just make an outline of their introduction and write it later. This will include outlining a few points to establish the paper's context and a (working) thesis statement. This draft introduction and thesis statement will allow the writer to define the scope of the paper, so they are less likely to stray off topic while writing the body paragraphs. When revising a rough introduction into a full paragraph later, it is important to ensure that the introduction does not include specific details from the discussion, as these details belong in the body paragraphs.

What if I still have questions about introductory paragraphs?

Ultimately, the professor evaluating the paper can provide the most insight on how he or she would like the introduction paragraph written and what it should include. If in doubt, visit them in their office hours or consult the assignment's guidelines. The Academic Success Centre's peer tutors can also help. Visit us on the Abbotsford campus in room G126, on the CEP campus in room A1212, or online at www.ufv.ca/asc.

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

General statement

Anyone who has ever taught knows that the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else. This fundamental principle underpins the concept of peer tutoring, where “peers” are generally regarded as being individuals of the same or similar intellectual status and/or social standing. Peer assisted learning (PAL) or acquisition of knowledge and skills through active helping and supporting among status peer equals, is now being increasingly used in medical education. Peer assisted learning is an efficient and effective way of preparing medical students for their future role as educators. While initial studies reported that PAL was inferior to faculty assisted learning, more recent studies suggest that in some situations learning outcomes achieved may be comparable. Informal PAL can be witnessed in medical colleges; however, evidence of formally organized PAL sessions is lacking. Hence, exploring the utility of this method of learning in our medical colleges may provide some strength in paving the way for inclusion of PAL in the curriculum.

Specific and More Specific Statements

Thesis and Paper Organization

Sample Introduction adapted from:

Syed Asghar Naqi “Peer Assisted Learning as a Formal Instructional Tool”

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