

Intro to Writing, Part 7: Introductions and Conclusions

Middle School Tutorial

How to write an introduction

If the body of your essay is a skeleton, then your body needs a head. The **introductory paragraph** will become your skeleton's head. What is the introduction's purpose? Why even write one?

1. Grab your readers' attention and make them curious.

The first sentence in your introductory paragraph (or introduction) should grab the readers' attention, not bore them to death. For instance, if Jon, a young soccer player, wrote a report on why he wants to be on a professional team, he wouldn't begin it like this: "This is a paper on why I will someday play soccer on a professional team." If he did, you would start snoozing.

Your job is to grab the reader's interest by beginning with a bang. You do this by using an interesting statement, fact, quotation, or something that makes your readers want to keep reading. This first sentence is called a **hook** because it hooks the readers' attention, like this:

- **An interesting statement:** All my life I've had only one goal—to play soccer on a professional team.
- **An interesting fact:** A professional soccer team has only eleven players on the field. Someday, I'm going to be one of them.
- **A quotation:** "He's too small to play soccer." That's what my first soccer coach told my parents.



Here's an example of a student using a thought-provoking quotation:

According to an ad by the oil company Chevron, "It took us 125 years to use the first trillion barrels of oil. We'll use the next trillion in 30." We cannot keep using our natural resources at the rate we are today. What will we have left in fifty years? It is time to conserve some natural resources.

2. State an opinion.

If you are writing an opinion or writing to persuade someone, include your opinion in your introduction. Don't keep it a surprise.

On the next page, check out this writer's opinion in his introductory paragraph:

Wind blowing through your hair at 231 mph is an everyday experience for some people. No, I'm not talking about the latest hairdryer or the world's fastest rollercoaster ride or even a Ferrari. I'm talking about the world's fastest production car, the McLaren F1.

He begins with an attention-grabbing statement. As for his opinion, notice that he does not write, "I like the McLaren F1." He doesn't have to. You know his opinion of the car by how exciting he makes it sound in his introduction.

3. Show the readers what direction you are taking your subject.

Look at the introduction that has the quotation about barrels of oil in it. The direction the writer is taking her introduction, that of conserving natural resources, is the **thesis statement**, sometimes called the main idea. She will most likely continue on with different natural resources and how to conserve them, finishing with how the reader can conserve, too.

[See this tutorial to brush up on thesis statements \(main ideas\). >>](https://writingwithsharonwatson.com/intro-to-writing-part-6-easily-develop-thesis-statements/)

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4. What should you put in your introduction?

Make sure that these ingredients are swimming around in your introduction:

1. An interesting beginning to **hook** your readers.
2. The **subject matter**, like elephants in circuses or how to make a friend.
3. Your **opinion** of the topic, if this is an opinion paper.
4. Your **thesis statement** (main idea) to show what direction you are taking your subject.



If the reader doesn't know the subject matter, your opinion of it, or what direction you are taking it in by the end of the first paragraph, check your "recipe" to see what you left out.

Exercise #1. Write an introduction for an essay. Begin it with an attention grabber. If this is an opinion or persuasive essay, make sure the reader knows whether you are *for* or *against* the issue. Your thesis statement (main idea) will most likely be the last sentence in your introduction.

Below are some ideas for subjects you could use for your introduction. Use one of them or choose something else that you feel strongly about or that you are interested in. You will not be writing the rest of this essay.

1. You are writing to convince a friend NOT to watch a certain movie or read a particular book.
2. You are writing to explain the interesting lives of three kinds of frogs: their eating habits, habitats, and so on.
3. You are writing to tell your opinion on which fast food restaurant has the best food.
4. You are writing to convince girls that they should always wear pink.
5. You are writing to give your opinion on why dogs are better than cats (or on why cats are better than dogs).
6. You are writing to teach others how to make a basket in basketball.



How to write conclusions

If the introduction is your skeleton's head, then the conclusion is its feet.

The conclusion sums up what you've just written about, but you still aim at keeping your readers' attention.

Avoid restating all your reasons or points in your concluding paragraph (conclusion). That's a snoozer. Tell the reader something of interest about the subject without introducing another point. Again, use an interesting statement, fact, quotation, or other something else you've saved for the end. Here are some examples soccer-playing Jon could use for his conclusion:

- **An interesting statement:** It takes a lot of hard work to get on a professional team. It takes a powerful dream, too. And it takes an encouraging support team. I know I'll make it because I've got all three.



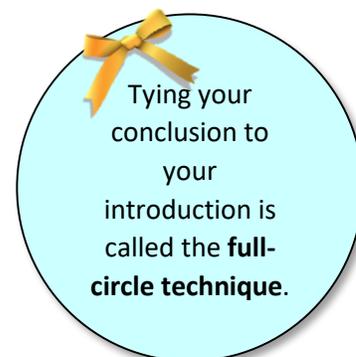
- **An interesting fact:** Before you tell me that my professional dreams are ridiculous, remember the famous skier that put our town on the map in the last Olympics. If she can make it from this small town, so can I. And I intend to!

- **A quotation:** At our annual awards dinner, the president of the Mountain City Soccer League said, "I think we have another Lionel Messi on our hands." He was referring to me. I'm not there yet, but I intend to be.

Get the picture? On the next page, read how the writer concluded his opinion paper on the McLaren F1. He uses interesting statements:

Obviously the McLaren F1 wins the race against the Ferrari 550 Mareneello because of its size, weight, and performance. No wonder the McLaren F1 is the world's fastest production car. Next time you want to take a joy ride, choose a McLaren F1—and skip the rollercoaster.

Any time you can tie your conclusion to your introduction, you give your reader a satisfying experience. Notice that when the writer mentions the roller coaster in his conclusion, he is tying that paragraph to the sentence about the “world’s fastest rollercoaster ride” in his introduction. You can do this, too, by repeating a word or phrase from your introduction, using a synonym, or finishing up a story you began in your introduction.



Exercise #2. Write a satisfying conclusion to the introduction you wrote. No need to actually write the whole essay. Just have fun with it and enjoy practicing.

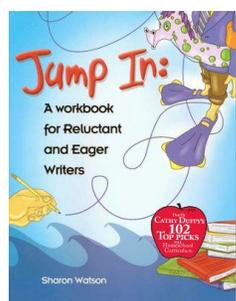
If you have been following along with the Intro to Writing tutorials on Writing with Sharon Watson, you likely have noticed something weird. You did not begin writing at the beginning. That is, you did not sit down, stare at a blank piece of paper, and have to come up with a brilliant first sentence. You began your writing by brainstorming, narrowing down your topic, brainstorming points and selecting a few of them to write about, and then writing the body of the essay. If you want to begin at the beginning and you have a great idea of where to go with your ideas, then go right ahead. But if you do not have a clear idea, then write the body first and the introduction and conclusion last.

Teachers

[Find the Intro to Writing tutorials, Parts 1-6, here. >>](https://writingwithsharonwatson.com/intro-to-writing-tutorials-parts-1-6/)

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