

Introductions

(<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/introductions/>)

The role of introductions

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write.

Your introduction and conclusion act as bridges that transport your readers from their own lives into the “place” of your analysis.

What constitutes a good introduction may vary widely based on the kind of paper you are writing and the academic discipline in which you are writing it.

Why bother writing a good introduction?

You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

The opening paragraph of your paper will provide your readers with their initial impressions of your argument, your writing style, and the overall quality of your work.

A vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression.

On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of you, your analytical skills, your writing, and your paper.

Your introduction is an important road map for the rest of your paper.

Your introduction conveys a lot of information to your readers. You can let them know what your topic is, why it is important, and how you plan to proceed with your discussion.

After reading your introduction, your readers should not have any major surprises in store when they read the main body of your paper.

Ideally, your introduction will make your readers want to read your paper.

The introduction should capture your readers' interest, making them want to read the rest of your paper.

Strategies for writing an effective introduction

Start by thinking about the question (or questions) you are trying to answer.

Decide how general or broad your opening should be.

Try writing your introduction last.

Don't be afraid to write a tentative introduction first and then change it later.

Open with something that will draw readers in.

Pay special attention to your first sentence.

How to evaluate your introduction draft

Ask a friend to read your introduction and then tell you what he or she expects the paper will discuss, what kinds of evidence the paper will use, and what the tone of the paper will be.

If your friend is able to predict the rest of your paper accurately, you probably have a good introduction.