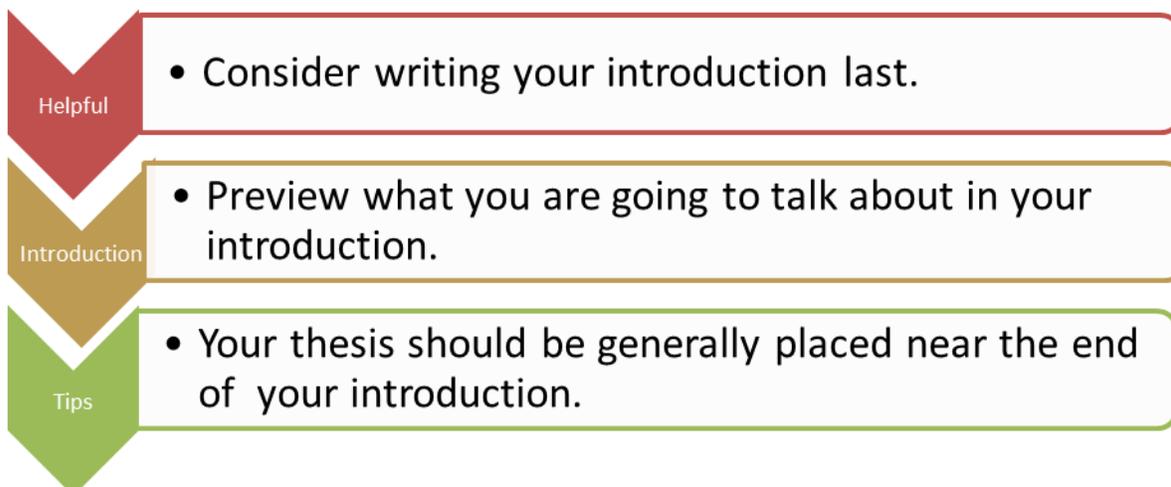
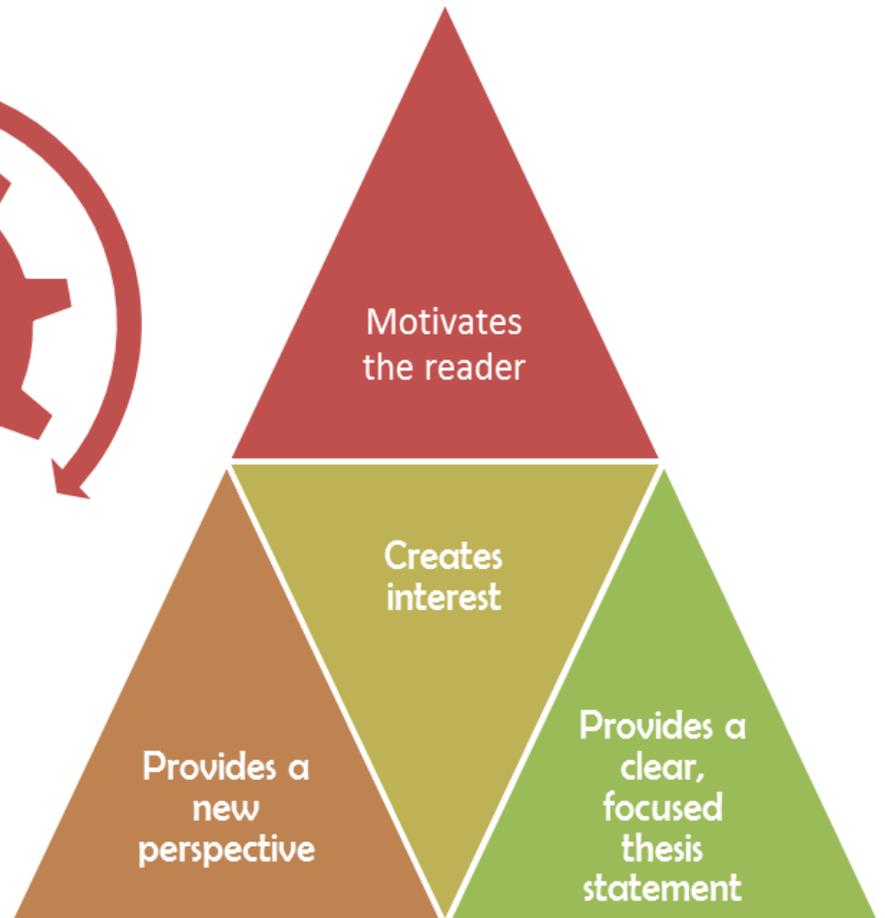




# Effective Introductions





## What is an introduction?

The introduction of an essay is a reader's first impression of your work and is key to an effective essay. Your introduction should introduce the topic and main ideas of your essay and begin with an attention getter, which captures the audience's attention and convinces the reader to continue reading. The introduction also previews your essay and gives your reader your main points. The length depends on your topic, purpose, audience, and includes your thesis statement.

### Strategies to get started:

If you are having trouble starting your introduction, think about your purpose, main idea, and the audience of your essay.

- What does your audience need to know about your topic?
- How does your topic affect your audience? How will you portray your topic?
- What argument/action does your topic require?

#### *Consider writing your introduction last:*

An introduction's purpose is to preview the main points of an essay, and through writing your essay, you will discover your main arguments and ideas. An introduction written in the beginning of an essay may not express those ideas as clearly as one written at the end because you don't know exactly where your essay is going. If you experience difficulty with writing your intro last, try writing a quick, rough intro and then go back after drafting your essay and revise accordingly.

#### *Preview your argument and main points:*

An effective introduction always previews the main points/arguments of an essay. Your main points should reflect your topic and preview your thesis statement. To effectively integrate your main points into your introduction, introduce the topic, discuss relevant content, preview your main points, and include your thesis statement.

#### *Start with an attention getter such as:*

- An example of your topic
- A question or detailed scenario
- Vivid anecdote
- Thought-provoking quotation
- Interesting statistics and facts

#### *When writing an effective introduction, make sure to include:*

- Attention getter
- Content that relates to the topic of the essay
- Main points that support the thesis of the essay
- Thesis and transition

#### *Pitfalls of introductions include:*

- Using dictionary definitions as an attention-getter
- Using too many details that should be explored in the body of the essay
- Using vague ideas, words, and phrases that may be unclear to your audience.



Here are some examples of effective introductions (Note: that not all introductions may follow this format. There are many ways to write effective introductions).

#### Example One: Scientific/Psychology Introduction

Child rearing can be a rewarding life experience and, as natural animals, many humans see this as a goal in their life; but what happens when individuals are not up to the task? For an expectant parent, three options are possible: abortion, place the baby up for adoption immediately after birth, or raise the child themselves. When choosing the second option, the baby automatically has the label as an orphan however, being so young the chances of adoption are likely greater than their aged counterparts. The third option seems to be the responsible and appropriate action to take, most would agree, but sometimes these situations become malignant and in these cases, the parent(s) is (are) not fit to raise their child. It is in these cases that outside intervention comes into play and the child or children are removed from the negative family atmosphere and typically placed in temporary “safer” homes. While this appears to be the best action taken for the child, the foster care system remains highly antiquated regarding what social scientists have discovered occurs psychologically in the majority of foster children. The United States’ children of foster care often have attachment issues, which leads to a greater chance of learned helplessness and behavior problems as society instills a self-fulfilling prophecy into them that they cannot overcome their childhood hardships.

#### Example Two: Compare and Contrast Literary Essay Introduction

In many works of literature, death is a transformative part of the human experience. T.S. Eliot, the author of “The Waste Land” and “The Hollow Men,” is no stranger to the topic of death. In fact, the majority of his poems explore death and the implications it has on human emotions. Eliot, an American and British writer in the 1920s often centered his poems around the topic of death. Likewise, Sylvia Plath also explores the theme of death and revival. Plath, an American writer during the 1960s, often created works that are said to be autobiographical. Plath ended her own life by suicide in 1963, and many scholars agree that her work clearly depicts her suicidal nature. Although Eliot and Plath were not writing in the same era, their works often play off one another in terms of theme. Eliot and Plath’s works are very much alike in theme and topic, however, differ when it comes to content and style. This contrast is evident between Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” and Plath’s “Lady Lazarus.” Although both poems deal with death and the consideration of suicide, Eliot’s poem depicts death in a more human light. Although both T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” and Sylvia Plath’s “Lady Lazarus” portray the topic of death, Eliot’s portrayal is stronger than Plath’s portrayal because of his use of emotion through figurative language and allusion.

#### **Color Key:**

Red: Attention Getter

Blue: Strategy: audience writer is writing to/for

Black: Main points/ideas

Green: Preview of argument

Brown: Thesis Statement