



MODUL *ESSAY WRITING*
(PBI225)

MODUL SESI 3
INTRODUCTORY AND CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

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INTRODUCTORY AND CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

A. The Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, students are expected to be able to

1. Understand how to grab readers' attention in an introductory paragraph
2. Understand how to write final thought in the concluding paragraph

B. INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

The introductory paragraph is the first paragraph of an essay ...

- ✓ is usually five to ten sentences.
- ✓ catches the reader's interest.
- ✓ gives the general topic of the essay.
- ✓ gives background information about the topic.
- ✓ states the main point (the thesis statement) of the essay.

An introductory paragraph has two parts, general statements and the thesis statement.

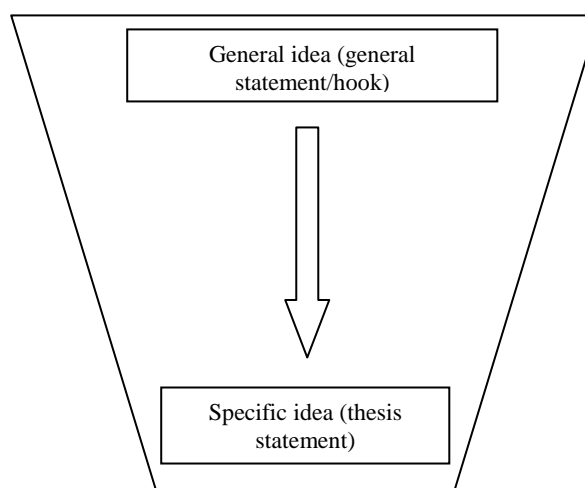
General statements

- introduce the general topic of the essay.
- capture the reader's interest.

The thesis statement:

- states the specific topic.
- may list subtopics or subdivisions of the main topic or subtopics.
- may indicate the pattern of organization of the essay.
- is normally the last sentence in the introductory paragraph.

The introduction is often organised by giving the most general ideas first and then leading to the most specific idea, which is the thesis statement, like this:



How to write a strong introduction

A strong introduction . . .

- ✓ introduces the topic clearly.
- ✓ gives several sentences of information about the topic.
- ✓ states the thesis (the main idea) of the essay.

Any of the following will make an introduction weak:

- It doesn't give enough information about the topic or gives too much information about it.
- It talks about too many different topics.
- It does not state a clear thesis.

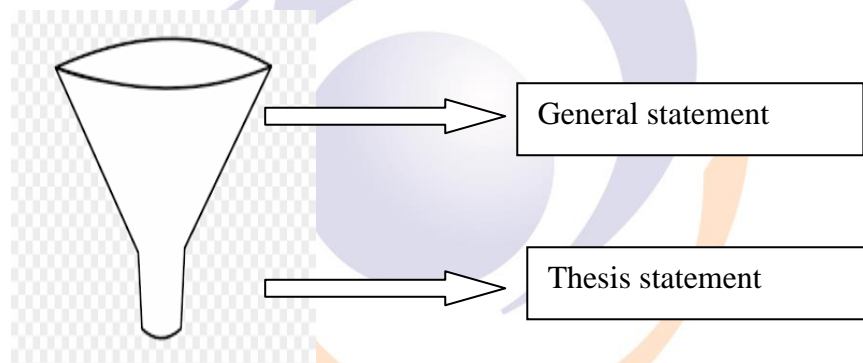
Notice **how the general statements in the introductory paragraph of the model essay introduce the topic**. The first sentence is about the arrival of Europeans and their encounter with new cultures. The next sentence points out that there were large differences between European and Native Americans. The next two sentences say that two-way cultural exchange happened, but the direction of the exchange and the specific items are not identified.

When the first Europeans came to the North American continent, they encountered the completely new cultures of the Native American peoples of North America. Native Americans, who had highly developed cultures in many respects, must have been as curious about the strange European manners and customs as the Europeans were curious about them. As always happens when two or more cultures come into contact, there was a cultural exchange. Native Americans adopted some of the Europeans' ways, and the Europeans adopted some of their ways.

The thesis statement is specific; it gives the direction of the exchange (Native American influences on modern u.s. culture) and lists the subtopics (language, art, food, and government).

As a result, Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture, particularly in the areas of language, art, food, and government.

The introductory paragraph of the model essay above is a **funnel introduction**. This introduction is so called because it is **shaped like a funnel-wide** at the top and narrow at the bottom. It begins with **one or two very general sentences** about the topic. Each subsequent sentence becomes increasingly **focused on the topic until the last sentence**, which states very specifically what the essay will be about. Writing a funnel introduction is like focusing a camera with a telephoto lens. You start with a wide picture and gradually narrow the focus so that just one object appears in the camera's view finder: your **thesis statement**.



1. GENERAL STATEMENT: ATTENTION-GETTING INTRODUCTION

How to make an introduction interesting

To make an introductory paragraph interesting for the reader, you can include ...

- ✓ interesting facts or statistics.
- ✓ a personal story or example.
- ✓ an interesting quotation.
- ✓ Etc

You write the sentences as **general statement** or **hook**. Write the general statement or hook in the beginning of the introductory paragraph. There are several different ways to grab the attention of your reader:

a) Using a definition

The definition is not taken from a dictionary. Try to paraphrase, or write your own unique take on a definition whenever you can. For example:

- *“When we intentionally make false statements, we lie. Lies are regarded as sins, vices, transgressions, and immoral offences.”*
- *“Business is more than just an exchange of funds for services or goods.”*

b) Using an interesting quotation or paraphrasing

If you use a quote, make sure that it is relevant to your topic, background information or your thesis in some way. Avoid over-used quotes or clichés, or if you must, try to put your own original spin on an old cliché. For example:

- *“The playwright George Bernard Shaw provided us with the memorable definition ‘Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach.’ The film director Woody Allen took the definition one step further: ‘Those who can’t teach, teach gym’.”*
- *“Everyone has heard the old saying “Time flies,” but I never expected the truth to be so literal.*

c) Using a little known or striking facts

Try to surprise and impress your reader with an interesting fact related to your topic. If it is a commonly known fact, people won’t be as interested in learning more. Do not forget to cite your research. For example:

- *“A cockroach can carry more than 40 different pathogens that could spread to humans.”*
- *“Of about 3 million youth that are injured every year playing sports or participating in recreational activities, only 25% are treated in hospital emergency rooms.”*

d) Using a statement of opinion that you intend to challenge

No one can resist a bit of fair and healthy conflict. If you can challenge the reader’s understanding of the world without alienating their beliefs or values, you have a good chance of getting their attention quickly. For example:

- *“Canadians cling to three myths about their country.”*
- *“Most people think that writing is something that only those with a born talent can ever do well.”*

e) Using an interesting incident or anecdote related to your subject

If you have observed or experienced something personally that can demonstrate why the topic interests you, then your reader will likely be interested as well. For example:

- *“At the supermarket where I work as a cashier, I classify my customers according to how they relate to me.”*
- *“I am Korean-Canadian; but the hyphen often snaps in two, obliging me to choose to act as either a Korean or a Canadian, depending on where I am and who I am with”*

f) Using an explanation of why the topic is worth writing/reading about

Sometimes a general statement that pinpoints the key issue, fact, or observation that led you to choose your topic in the first place can interest the reader as well. For example:

- *“Students face all kinds of problems when they start college. Some students struggle with...”*
- *“Students don’t always remember what they were told at orientation.”*

g) Using a question that will be answered by your thesis, or will catch the reader’s attention and lead toward your thesis topic

Questions can immediately garner attention as long as the answer isn’t immediately obvious or too obscure.

- *“Have you ever stayed up all night to study for an exam, only to sleep through your exam the next morning?”*
- *“Why shouldn’t everyone have access to free dental care?”*

2. A THESIS STATEMENT

The thesis statement is the most important sentence in the introduction. It states **the specific topic** of the essay. For example,

- *Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture.*
- *Young people in my culture have less freedom than young people in the United States.*

- *The large movement of people from rural to urban areas has major effects on cities*

Sometimes a thesis statement lists **the subtopics** that will be discussed in the body.

- *Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture, particularly in the areas of language, art, food, and government.*
- *Young people in my culture have less freedom than young people in the United States in their choice of where they live, whom they marry, and what their job is.*
- *The large movement of people from rural to urban areas has major effects on a city's ability to provide housing, employment, and adequate sanitation services.*

Sometimes a thesis statement also indicates **the pattern of organization** that the essay will follow. Which of the following thesis statements indicates **chronological order? Logical division of ideas? Comparison/contrast?**

- *When buying a used car, use these four strategies to get the best price.*
- *There are several differences between a nurse practitioner and a physician's assistant.*
- *My best friend and I spent an entire summer constructing a tree house in my grandmother's old apple tree.*

The thesis statement is the sentence that tells the main idea of the whole essay. It can be compared to a topic sentence, which gives the main idea of a paragraph. It usually comes at or near the end of the introductory paragraph.

Writing a strong thesis statement

- a) A thesis statement **gives the author's opinion or states an important idea** about the topic. It should give an idea that can be discussed and explained with supporting ideas:

- ❖ *The qualifications for getting into university in my country are unreasonable.*

- ❖ *When studying a foreign language, there are several ways to improve your use of the language.*

These are strong thesis statements. They can be discussed or explained.

- b) A thesis statement **should not be a sentence that only gives a fact** about the topic:

- ❖ *In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer months are warmer than the winter months.*

This is not a strong thesis statement. It cannot be discussed or argued about.

- c) A thesis statement **should not state two sides of an argument equally**:

- ❖ *There are advantages and disadvantages to using nuclear power.*

This could be a topic sentence, but it is not a thesis statement. It gives two sides of an argument without giving a clear opinion of support or disagreement. It could be revised like this:

- ❖ *Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages and should not be a part of our country's energy plan.*

This is a strong thesis statement. It clearly gives the writer's opinion about nuclear power.

Writing Thesis Statement

How to connect the thesis statement and the essay

The paragraphs in the main body of an essay should always explain the thesis statement. In addition, each paragraph in the main body should discuss *one* part of the thesis. Look at the following thesis statement. The topics to be discussed are underlined:

To create a successful advertisement, it is necessary for advertisers to answer three questions: What are we selling?, Who are we selling it to?, and How can we make people want to buy it?

Possible topic sentences for each paragraph in the main body:

- 1) *The first step in creating a successful advertisement is to completely understand the product that is being sold and how it can be used.*
- 2) *A second important part of creating an advertisement is deciding who is expected to buy the product.*
- 3) *Finally, a way must be found to create an ad that will make people want to buy the product.*

How to develop a thesis statement

One way to develop a thesis statement for an essay is to write opinions you have about the topic. Begin, *I think that ...* and complete the sentence with your opinion. Then remove *I think that ...* and the remaining words (underlined) make a possible thesis statement.

Topic: diet / food

I think that a vegetarian diet is one of the best ways to live a healthy life.

~~I think that~~ governments should restrict the use of chemicals in agriculture and food production.

After you have written several opinion statements, choose the one that would make the best thesis. Remember to decide if the sentence gives a clear opinion, states a fact, or presents two sides without a clear argument.

C. CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

The conclusion is the final paragraph of the essay. A good concluding paragraph ...

- summarises the main points of the essay.
- restates the thesis (using different words).
- makes a final comment or final thought about the essay's main idea.
- may emphasise an action that you would like the reader to take.

Do not introduce new ideas in a conclusion. A conclusion only restates or gives further commentary on ideas discussed in the essay.

Here are techniques that you can use to write a memorable conclusion.

1). Make a prediction.

We have seen how the costs of attending college have been rising while, at the same time, sources of financial aid for students have been disappearing. If this trend continues, fewer and fewer families will be able to send their children through four years of college.

2) Suggest results or consequences.

To sum up, the costs of attending college are up and financial aid for students is down. Fewer and fewer future members of the workforce are able to educate themselves beyond high school. As a result, the nation will waste the intelligence, imagination, and energy of a large segment of the present college-age generation.

3) Suggest a solution, make a recommendation, or call for action.

It is clear that the U.S. system of higher education is in trouble. For many students, four years of college is no longer possible because of increasing costs and decreasing financial aid. To reverse this trend, we must demand that government increase its financial support of colleges and universities and restore financial aid programs. Our future depends on it.

4) Quote an authority on the topic.

In conclusion, costs are rising and financial aid is declining, with the result that many can no longer afford to go to college. If our nation is to prosper, increased government funding for education is essential, even if it requires higher taxes. As Horace Mann argued in his Fifth Annual Report, a nation's economic wealth will increase through an educated public. It is therefore in the self-interest of business to pay the taxation for public education.

D. REFERENCES

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