

# Introductions and Conclusions



THE WRITING CENTER

JUDITH G. GARDNER CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

## • Introduction •

The most useful way to think of an intro is as the place where you'll give your reader the background information they need to understand your main thesis.

**What does your reader need to know before diving into the body of your essay?** If you were going to start talking about this essay's content to a friend, how would you introduce it to them?

- I. Background and context. Give us a sense of the situation housing your essay.
  - Start broad, with more general information—the general topic, background information, or context.
  - **Keep it relevant.** Don't begin too generally; be careful not to include any unnecessary information.
  - Become more specific as you go, leading to the thesis that states the main point of your essay in particular.
- II. Thesis statement. This is usually the final sentence of your introduction.
  - This is **the main point of your essay in one sentence.** Reading just your thesis statement, your reader should know what your whole essay is about.
  - Your thesis statement acts as a **roadmap** that outlines the main points of the rest of your essay.

Other than this, you may want to include a justification in your intro—where you **explain the importance of this topic and justify why you've studied it.** But this is not always necessary.

Some other things to keep in mind while writing:

- » **It's perfectly fine to write the intro after the body of your essay.** Sometimes you won't know what information best contextualizes your content until after you've written it.
- » **Your thesis statement can change as you go.** The thesis statement you start with won't always continue to reflect the body of your essay as you write it and get to know your topic better. It's often easier to tweak your thesis than to reorganize your paper.

The **introduction** and **conclusion** of your paper are often the trickiest portions to tackle. You may know exactly what information to discuss in the body, but how do you open up your topic? How do you wrap things up effectively?

## • Conclusion •

Once all the ideas of your paper are fully fleshed out, you're ready to write your conclusion. This is where you'll tie together all your main ideas and leave your reader with something to chew on.

- I. Summary. Give a recap of the main ideas that your reader should get from your paper.
  - This is often called a restated thesis, although it's usually more detailed than the thesis of your paper.
  - Assuming your reader still has your main points in mind, reiterate them in a way that highlights the relationships between the ideas of your essay.
- II. End on a thoughtful note. Once the main points are made quite clear, do something interesting with them.
  - You might talk about the significance of this topic. How does it apply to the field more broadly? How does it communicate with closely related topics of interest?
  - Depending on how formal your paper is, you might relate the topic to your personal interest. Did you begin with a personal note? You might end with one, too.

Keep in mind as you write your conclusion:

- » **Don't bring in any totally new ideas.** The trick is to relate your main ideas to something of slightly broader significance. The conclusion is not the place to bring in new concepts.
- » **Your reader should already be fully informed as to the content of your essay.** Don't make your argument or present vital information in your conclusion. By the time your reader reaches the conclusion, all the content of the essay should already have been fully covered in the body.