Effective Introductions

The introduction of an essay is a reader’s first impression of your work and is key to an effective essay. Your introduction should 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 and includes your thesis statement. The length depends on your topic, purpose, audience.

Strategies to get started:

- 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.

- **Include only what is necessary:** An introduction should only introduce the ideas you will discuss in your body paragraphs. Try to avoid going into great detail and/or exploring the ideas you bring up. If you are unsure if a section of your introduction is necessary as yourself, “Does my audience need to be aware of this in order to understand the rest of my paper?”
• When writing an effective introduction, make sure to include:
  ⇒ Attention getter
  ⇒ Audience
  ⇒ Content that relates to the topic of the essay
  ⇒ Main points that support the thesis of the essay/preview of the argument
  ⇒ Thesis and transition

• 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

• Avoid pitfalls of introductions, which include:
  ⇒ Using dictionary definitions as an attention-getter
  ⇒ Using too many details that should be explored in the body of the essay

Example

Color Key

• Red: Attention Getter
• Blue: Strategy: audience writer is writing to/for
• Black: Main points/ideas
• Green: Preview of argument
• Brown: Thesis Statement
Example Introductions

Comics have been part of America since the 1930’s and their appeal has survived to present day. Graphic novels are comics in a trade paperback format- the story is told both through text and through images. Graphic novels first appeared on the scene in 1978 and are steadily becoming mainstream in American culture (Maureen Mooney, 2002). In recent years, much debate has been stirred regarding whether or not graphic novels have a place within a library’s collection. To most, comics and graphic novels are silly, violent and chauvinistic. However comics are no longer simply men in tights- many graphic novels deal with current issues, serious subjects and learning. Graphic novels have matured to become a legit form of literature with many titles winning major literary awards, including the Pulitzer Prize. While the overall general public tends to feel that graphic novels are a frivolous use of library budget, more and more librarians are finding that graphic novels are powerful tools in getting reluctant students to read (Arkansas State University, Dean B. Ellis Library).

Having children 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: place the baby up for adoption immediately after birth, abortion, 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.

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

Sources Consulted: Purdue OWL, Arkansas State University, and UNC Writing Center