

Introductions



The introductory paragraph **sets the tone for the rest of the essay**. Consider your “voice” and audience when writing one. What will interest the audience? What do they need to know to understand the topic? What kind of tone is appropriate? But it should always serve as a preface to the **thesis statement**, which is usually the final sentence. The thesis is the roadmap for the paper, presenting your argument to the reader.

Here is a list of techniques that can be useful in constructing a well-organized introduction and examples of how the **thesis** is used in each. Most of your essay introductions will be substantially longer than these brief examples:

1. **The Funnel Method:** Often, it can be helpful to begin by discussing your topic generally, in a broad scope. Eventually, work toward narrowing your ideas to a fine point, concluding with your main idea –the Thesis Statement, like a **V**.
For Example: There is no denying that smoking is bad for a person’s health. What isn’t often considered about smoking though, is how it may be affecting the health of non-smokers who are forced to breathe in the harmful smoke. To ensure the health of everyone, smoking should be banned in public places.
2. **Provide Background Information:** Sometimes it is necessary or useful to give the reader background information about a complicated topic. This may be information that is important for reference or to put your topic into proper context. Considering audience and purpose will help you to decide what information is best to use for your essay.
For Example: Many years ago, people were allowed to smoke almost any place that they liked. Even in schools and hospitals people were allowed to smoke. Only in the past few decades have doctors and scientists truly discovered the negative effects of second hand smoke. Because it is so dangerous to the health of everyone, smoking should be banned in public places.
3. **“Grabber”:** A startling fact or incident that helps to illustrate your main idea can be useful in gaining the audience’s attention immediately. This “grabber” should be relevant, show why the topic is important and captivate your audience. Be careful not to be *too* sensational, as this will result in the reader’s loss of confidence in you as a source of information.
For Example: Smoking related diseases affect millions of people worldwide each year. Still, in many public places, smoking is allowed to continue. To ensure the health of everyone, smoking should be banned in public places.
4. **Begin with a Quotation or a Question:** Questions and quotes are another way to grab the readers’ attention. Asking a question can get the reader to think about your topic, while facts, figures and statements from professionals in your specific field of discussion can validate discussion of your topic.
For Example: The Surgeon General warns, “Cigarette smoke contains carbon monoxide,” a seriously harmful chemical. Even in the light of this warning, many smokers continue to carelessly release this chemical in public places. To ensure the health of everyone, smoking should be banned in public places.
5. **Analogy or Anecdote:** An analogy is a comparison or simile that can be used to show how a situation, which is familiar to your reader, relates to your topic. An anecdote is a brief story or account of a situation or occurrence that is relevant and helps to illuminate your topic. Each of these methods can make for an effective opening.
For Example: Being forced to inhale cigarette smoke is like being stuck in a small garage with the engine of a truck running, releasing carbon monoxide into the air you are breathing. Just the same as no one should be forced to be trapped in a room with harmful car fumes, others should not be forced to inhale cigarette smoke. Because of the harmful affects to people’s health, smoking should be banned in public places.