

# Introductions & Conclusions

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As writers, we have all struggled with introductions and conclusions. Hopefully a few of these tips will spark your creativity. (Once you have drafted an introduction or conclusion, drop by the Meijer Center for Writing to get some feedback to it.)

## Introductions

Your introduction needs to prepare your reader for what lies ahead. Ideally, it should provide general information about your topic as well as your focused opinion (a.k.a. your thesis). The introduction should be cohesive and it should relate to the material in the rest of your paragraphs. The often-tricky part -- your introduction needs to be stimulating and challenging as well as interesting! Try some of the following ideas:

- Identify the situation
- Move from general to specific
- Provide some relevant statistics
- Tell a brief but applicable story
- Be direct
- Give pertinent background information
- Use a fitting quotation (not a cliché)
- Make an interesting analogy
- Ask the reader a thought-provoking question
- Emphasize the main idea

Sometimes, it's best to write your introduction last. After all, we often discover what we want to say as we write a draft of a paper!

Whatever you do, avoid obvious statements like the following: "In this paper, I'm going to tell you about the advantages of living off campus: cost, fun, and responsibility." Also avoid apologizing for your writing: "Certainly someone more knowledgeable could describe this better."

## Conclusions

Your conclusion is important; it is what will likely linger longest in your reader's mind. It needs to tie everything together in a way that satisfies the reader without being too repetitive. As with introductions, there is no easy recipe for a conclusion, but you may want to try some of the following strategies:

- Call your readers to action
- Speculate about the future of the issue
- Focus
- Reread your introduction or your whole paper to gain a clearer picture of your topic
- Ask a rhetorical question
- Emphasize the connection between your ideas
- Be direct

It is important not to simply restate the introduction in your conclusion. You should also avoid introducing new ideas into your conclusion. You should, however, leave your readers with a poignant idea or a sense of why what they read was important.