

Intros and Conclusions

How to start and end your essays with a bang

Introductions

Purpose

Introductions are essential to every essay you write. Whether it's a sentence long (which isn't normally recommended) or an entire paragraph, your introduction is the place where you introduce your main idea and how you're going to support that statement. Although what you write throughout the introduction is important, the first and last two sentences are what set up your intro and paper up for greatness.

Opening Statement/Hook

The opening statement is where you want to introduce the topic of your paper. However, when you're reading a book or someone else's paper, you want to be intrigued from the first sentence. This is the same for your own essays! You want to make your paper have as much style and interesting features as possible, and it can start with the first sentence. Here are some ideas for what to put in your opening statement:

- **Pose a question.** Rhetorical questions that relate to the topic of your essay are a great way to get your reader to want to read more since they'll want to find out the answer or how it relates to what you're talking about.
- **Include an interesting fact.** If there's an interesting fact that relates to your topic, then the opening statement is a great place to put it. This will catch the reader's attention and want them to find out more about what you're discussing.
- **Set a scene.** If you're writing a narrative essay, this would be where you describe the setting and what's going on. If it's a more formal essay, creating an image that relates to the idea you're trying to get across is still a great way to hook your reader.

Thesis Statement

This is where you state the main idea of your paper. If you're writing an argumentative or persuasive paper, this is where you write what your opinion is. If you're writing an analysis paper, this is where you state your interpretation or point of view of the piece of literature you analyzed. Make sure to:

- **Keep it short and sweet.** Make it as to the point as you can. Your thesis is what you refer back to for the rest of the paper, so you want to make sure that it's a focused statement and identifies only the major points you're putting in your essay.
- **Include the main ideas of your paragraphs.** In order to introduce everything that you're going to discuss in one sentence, identify the main ideas that your body paragraphs are going to discuss along with the main idea of the entire paper.
- **Put it at the end.** Don't state your main idea until you're ready to further explain that statement. Put it at the end so you can easily transition into further explaining and backing up your argument/point of view/analysis.

Sample Intro

On September 11, 2001, the world watched in terror as one of the most powerful nations fell under attack. Two planes piloted by members of al Qaeda crashed into the colossal World Trade Center towers, eventually sending the two skyscrapers and the people in them to their death. These terrorists awoke a nationalist surge within the U.S. with the fall of terrorism at its heart, commencing the nation's involvement in the Afghan war. The military stepped on that foreign soil confident that their goal of exterminating the Taliban, a terrorist group attempting to take over Afghanistan, would quickly be accomplished (Witte).

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Conclusion

Purpose

After backing up your main idea that you first stated in your thesis statement, the conclusion is meant to wrap the paper up by reiterating that main idea by summarizing what you talked about throughout the essay while also adding a bit of new information. This may sound confusing, but there's a very easy way to do this.

Steps to a Successful Conclusion

- **First summarize.** Briefly describe what you talked about in your essay, but do not repeat your thesis statement.
- **Add a quote.** This is one way that you can add new information. A thought provoking quote that relates to the topic of the essay can open up an opportunity to briefly discuss your main idea a little more which can lead to a better feeling of closure in the essay.
- **Call to action.** If your essay is argumentative, an ending statement that encourages your reader to take action on what your argument is discussing is a perfect way to wrap your argument up.

Sample Conclusion

Beyond shadow of a doubt, the Afghanistan War for the U.S. is something that simply can't be won. The Taliban are too infused into Afghan society to be taken down by an outside force, especially since the U.S. has little to no understanding of the specific characteristics of the group. In the words of Thomas Friedman, "Such normative transformations can only come from within, from the will of local actors to change long-embedded habits...". The U.S. can't drag the Taliban to negotiate peace, no matter how long they fight. The Taliban will always feel as if they are winning due to their religious convictions (Rasmussen), and support for the war will only diminish as troops trudge on in foreign land. The U.S. government needs to help the Afghan government start to get back on its feet and realize their work is done. All troops need to be pulled out, financial aid to the Afghan government needs to be set at a minimum, and all other affairs pertaining to Afghanistan need to be handled at a safe distance. Before history repeats itself more than it already has, this war needs to be eradicated from American life and put solely on the shoulders of the members of the Afghan nation.
