

The Introduction Paragraph and Hook

The introductory paragraph is the doorway to the essay; it should be inviting enough to draw readers in, and it should offer them a view of the path which the essay will follow. This is not an easy job because a writer must transport the reader from their own lives to the place of the argument. The writer must build that transition carefully, logically and most importantly in an appealing and engaging manner.

The job of this wondrous paragraph is to:

- Grab or “hook” your readers attention
- Tell the reader the subject of your discussion
- Tell the reader your point or your stand (called the thesis statement)
- Tell the reader your belief (called the opinion)
- Indicate the pattern of your writing or the “structure.”

Common Methods for Developing Introductory Paragraphs

FUNNEL

Begin with a universal topic or general truth about your subject area. Narrow and refine your focus by giving the reader the situation, issues, or events surrounding the topic that relate to your thesis or main point. Then further elaborate on that thesis statement.

Heroism is a thorny proposition. It is an idea that encompasses personal values, societal norms, and cultural imperatives. Not surprisingly the world is rife with heroes of a variety of stripes: those who are stoic yet mild mannered like Superman, those who are intrepid yet conflicted like Spiderman, those who are chosen but reluctant like Neo of the Matrix, and those who are bestowed with an almost supernatural power yet cry to their mother and sulk in their tents like Achilles of Homer’s The Iliad. Indeed all heroes worth their capes and their shields are possessed of a double nature, one that both defines them as valiant saviors of humanity and one that reveals them as enormously human, almost vulnerable in affect. Such is the case with Achilles, the great hero of the Trojan War. For while Achilles is heir to no shortage of untenable qualities (rage, cruelty, petulance, and suicidal tendencies) it is his very humanity, his many flaws, that renders his accomplishments all the more heroic, above that of Odysseus, who is distinguished for his cunning, his loyalty, and his judicious restraint; his seemingly flawless character. But is it the outcome that defines a hero or is it the hero’s journey? Achilles is by far more heroic than Odysseus because Achilles had to work with and against his many faults and imperfections to achieve his timeless glory.....

IMAGERY OR ANECDOTE

Begin by relating an anecdote or a brief story that helps the reader draw a mental picture of your essay topic. By creating an imaginary situation, you allow the reader to envision your point or thesis.

In Downtown Atlanta's rush hour traffic, a car belches black smoke into the air as its driver zips from one lane to another beating the fleet of oncoming cars to the left turn. Narrowly escaping a four-car pile up, the driver honks his horn in victory. Moments later, car and driver are once again inching along as traffic slows to a crawl in the wake of another accident. Although automobiles offer great flexibility and convenience for their owners, congestion, air pollution, and accidents caused by reckless driving are some of the negative effects of the automobile on America's cities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OR INTERESTING FACTS OR FIGURES

Lead into your thesis by acknowledging your topic's positive aspects. Or start by providing key facts such as dates, times, places, names, and statistics to give historical context and credibility to your essay.

To the list of professional basketball players such as Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, and Larry Bird who have become household words, sports fans can add another name: Shaquille O'Neal or "Shaq" for short. A few short years ago Shaq was yet another high school basketball player who had dreams of becoming an NBA player. But unlike the great majority of high school hopefuls, Shaq had the unbeatable talents of which sports fame and fortune are made. Shaq began his career with the Orlando Magic. He now plays for the Los Angeles Lakers. How Shaquille O'Neal was discovered and how he became a nationally known player makes an interesting story....

ASKING A REVEALING QUESTION

Begin by asking a question that is new and surprising and that reveals information about your essay topic. The question should provide a basis for what your essay discusses.

Is American going back to previous times when children had no more rights than cattle? Some migrant children still work 14 hours a day picking fruits and vegetables on farms. Can this country afford to spend money on putting people into space when the most vulnerable citizens remain virtually captive to a slave industry? Countless children live on the streets with no place to call their own.

QUOTATION AND EXPLANATION

Begin with a quotation from a book, article, poem, or interview that illustrates your point, introduces your thesis, and gives credibility or authority to your writing. Explain what the quotation means and how it relates to your thesis.

"Fish and visitors," wrote Benjamin Franklin, "begin to smell after three days." Last summer, when my sister and her family came to spend their two-week vacation with us, I became convinced that Franklin was right. After only three days of my family's visit, I was thoroughly sick of my brother-in-law's corny jokes, my sister's endless complaints about her boss, and their children's constant invasions of our privacy.

What You Most Definitely Must Not Do EVER, as in NEVER

1. Ask a yes or no question: *Ever wonder about redemption?*
2. Ask an obvious or clichéd question: *What is heroism?*
3. Begin with a denotation: *Webster's defines hero as...*
4. Begin with a quote that you do not explain or revisit: *"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." And Achilles was the greatest Greek hero of all time.*
5. Use a "placeholder" introduction which makes a broad and vague statement which essentially signals ya got nuthin': *There are a lot of heroes out there in this crazy world of ours.*
6. The "Dawn of Man" Introduction: Since man stepped foot on this planet he has created and worshipped heroes.
7. The book report introduction: *The blind poet Homer wrote The Iliad in the eighth century B.C. It is the story of the Trojan War.*
8. The restated question strategy: *Who better defines the ideals of heroism, Odysseus or Achilles? This is both a compelling and divisive issue that remains unanswered: until now.*