**Introduction**

The introduction is the broad beginning of the paper that answers three important questions:

1. What is this?
2. Why am I reading it?
3. What do you want me to do?

You should answer these questions by doing the following:

1. Set the context –provide general information about the main idea, explaining the situation so the reader can make sense of the topic and the claims you make and support
2. State why the main idea is important –tell the reader why he or she should care and keep reading. Your goal is to create a compelling, clear, and convincing essay people will want to read and act upon
3. At the end of the introduction state your thesis*/*claim –compose a sentence stating the position you will support in your paper.

You have **ONE** opportunity to capture the reader’s attention. Experiment with different attention-getting strategies: **Quotation, Dialogue, Rhetorical question, Startling statement, Anecdote, challenge, interesting fact.**

**Attention Getters:** Bait Your Hook and Lure 'Em

* In effective writing an attention-getter is the first part of the introduction. As the name implies, it must grab the attention of readers to entice them. to read on.
* Most Attention Getters are at least 2-4 sentences, depending on the technique you use and topic. They should surprise, surprise, tickle the readers in an instant or they'll get away.
* You must lead from the attention-getter smoothly into the rest of the introduction, which leads to the thesis statement.
* The goal is to funnel down smoothly so that the Attention Getter doesn't lose its power.
* Some writers write the introduction after they have written the entire paragraph or essay. However, the thesis statement must be written before you start so that the focus is clear. Remember, though, that the topic sentence or thesis is always at the end of the introduction. If you have a strong introduction, it is easier to write a conclusion that comes back to that creative idea you used in the introduction.
* Do not put any of the main points from the body of the paper into the introduction.
* It will also set the tone of the writing: serious, humorous, sarcastic, etc.
* **METHODS:**

1. Start with a **startling statement, fact, or statistic** which will arrest the readers' attention to surprise, horrify, anger, or amuse them into reading more. Use exaggeration where appropriate but don't be obnoxious.

**SOME EXAMPLES:**

**Humor (Exaggerate):** Our neighbors have all moved away —again, and it's all Mom's fault—again. Their subtle hints and then outright criticism went right over her head. First it was Christmas wreaths in July, and then it was plastic eggs in December. (THESIS STATEMENT) Leaving holiday decorations up during the wrong season can cause many problems.

**Horrify:** Imagine a line of dead and mangled bodies stretching for twenty-five miles—25,000 corpses. That is the number of victims of drunk driving every year. It's hard to believe that the number is increasing in spite of the ads and community awareness efforts. (THESIS STATEMENT) The time has come to take more specific measures to get drunk drivers off the road.

**Startle:** Buyers beware! A suit, shined shoes, a Rolex, Old Spice, and a dazzling smile don't make someone an expert. People should not let smooth-talking advertisers, manufacturers, and car salesmen sell them the wrong car. (THESIS STATEMENT) They can get the car that's just right for them if they follow this advice.

1. Start with a **direct quotation from a recognized authority, a famous person or a literary selection**.

**SOME EXAMPLES:**

**Authority:** "Drinking kills more young drivers than any other cause," says John Smith, head of Wisconsin highway safety. "Their corpses litter the highways of America every night." Sadly, many think that there is nothing they can do about this except have their own designated driver or take friends' and family members' keys away. (THESIS STATEMENT) However, studies have shown that cell phones save more people from drunken driving than most people would imagine.

**Literary work:** "Little Miss Muffffet sat on a tuffffet... along came a spider..." She was lucky it wasn't a brown recluse spider. Now found as far north as Wisconsin, this spider sports a nasty bite that unless treated correctly can cause death. (THESIS STATEMENT) It's easy to avoid being bitten by following these steps.

**Famous person:** "I never forget a face, but in your case I'll make an exception." Groucho Marx was a master of insults that most found hilarious, as long as the jibes weren't directed at them. So make sure no one says this to you because you are not enhancing your best facial features. (THESIS STATEMENT) Applying makeup correctly every day can keep the Grouchos away.

Go to Google and type in quotations about your topic. If you use one, be sure you make a connection between the point of the quotation and your topic as I did in the preceding example. NOTE that none of these examples used the expression, "This quotation means that (says that)" or "These words by Groucho Marks show that..." Be smoother.

1. Start with a **verbal picture** that relates to the topic. Do not begin "Picture this" or "Imagine this.."

**SOME EXAMPLES:**

The young driver turns up the stereo louder and smiles as he dreams of the fun he had at the party—plenty of good music and beer. Suddenly a tree appears from out of nowhere. He grabs at the wheel to turn the car. Headlights swerve in the darkness. But it's too late. A patrol car screams to find the twisted body of another kid who drank and drove. (THESIS STATEMENT) Teenagers need to understand the effects of alcohol on their adolescent bodies.

Volcanoes spewed gases into the sky. As heat and gas rose into the atmosphere, massive clouds formed, blotting out the sun. From one end of the globe to the other, lightning storms cracked and flashed. This is what the earth was like four and a half billion years ago. As if that scene isn't amazing enough, it's even more so that scientists know this. (THESIS STATEMENT) The techniques they use to establish theories like this are fascinating.

1. Start with a **contrast**.

**SOME EXAMPLES:**

A third-grade class gallops through a daisy-filled meadow with butterfly nets. A ninth-grade Latin class floods the zoo for a lesson in scientific names. High school seniors ride the Demon at Great America for physics class. (THESIS STATEMENT) A field trip may look like time set aside for fun and games, and most students prefer them to regular classes, but serious examination will show that they educate in a way textbooks and lectures never can.

If you think being big is the name of the game in the NBA, you're right. The typical pro basketball player looks like a skyscraper wearing size 18 sneakers. But that doesn't mean there isn't room for the little guy with big talent. (THESIS STATEMENT) Muggsy Bogues, at 5'5" tall, has played an integral part in the success of his team.

The adrenaline rush that accompanies a fast, successful run down the ski hill stays with skiers a long time. They feel alive and powerful as they take on the mountain. However, that feeling can be short-lived, literally, if they don't take suitable precautions. (THESIS STATEMENT) Skiers must respect the rules of the ski hills and use common sense to ski safely.

1. Start with an **anecdote**—an incident.

**SOME EXAMPLES:**

Paul Jones in Cambridge, Massachusetts, took his neighbor to court because the neighbor hadn't cut his grass in fourteen years. Kay Mart of Madison, Wisconsin, sued her neighbor because the leaves from his tree fell in her yard, and she had to rake them. Perhaps if lines of communication had been open or if each had shown a little more compassion to each other, it wouldn't have gone so far. (THESIS STATEMENT) Neighbors can be a curse, but establishing a good relationship with them is important.

Almost from the time the downtown No. 4 subway train began its 21-mile run below New York City at 11:38 PM on Tuesday, August 27, something seemed amiss. Heading from the Bronx to Manhattan, the train overshot the platform at a couple of stations. At times it slowed to a crawl and then accelerated to breakneck speeds. The conductor contacted the motorman, Robert Ray, 38, several times on the intercom to find out if everything was all right. Ray replied that he was fine. But that was clearly not the case. It was soon discovered that Ray was being held hostage by gunman. If he'd been allowed to carry a gun himself, neither Ray nor the passengers would have been in any danger. (THESIS STATEMENT) Subway officials need to implement more safety procedures.

# **Conclusions**

Conclusions wrap up what you have been discussing in your paper. After moving from general to specific information in the introduction and body paragraphs, your conclusion should begin pulling back into more general information that restates the main points of your argument. Conclusions may also call for action or overview future possible research. The following outline may help you conclude your paper:

In a general way,

* Restate your topic and why it is important,
* Restate your thesis/claim,
* Address opposing viewpoints and explain why readers should align with your position,
* Call for action or overview future research possibilities.

Remember that once you accomplish these tasks, unless otherwise directed by your instructor, you are finished. Done. Complete. Don't try to bring in new points or end with a whiz bang(!) conclusion or try to solve world hunger in the final sentence of your conclusion. Simplicity is best for a clear, convincing message.

The preacher's maxim is one of the most effective formulas to follow for argument papers:

1. Tell what you're going to tell them (introduction).
2. Tell them (body).
3. Tell them what you told them (conclusion).

### Strategies for Writing a Conclusion

Conclusions are often the most difficult part of an essay to write, and many writers feel that they have nothing left to say after having written the paper. A writer needs to keep in mind that the conclusion is often what a reader remembers best. Your conclusion should be the best part of your paper.

#### A conclusion should

* stress the importance of the thesis statement,
* give the essay a sense of completeness, and
* leave a final impression on the reader.

**Suggestions**

* **Answer the question "So What?"**

Show your readers why this paper was important. Show them that your paper was meaningful and useful.

* **Synthesize, don't summarize**
  + Don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. They have read it. Show them how the points you made and the support and examples you used were not random, but fit together.
* **Redirect your readers**
  + Give your reader something to think about, perhaps a way to use your paper in the "real" world. If your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general. Think globally.
* **Create a new meaning**
  + You don't have to give new information to create a new meaning. By demonstrating how your ideas work together, you can create a new picture. Often the sum of the paper is worth more than its parts.

**Strategies**

* **Echoing the introduction:**Echoing your introduction can be a good strategy if it is meant to bring the reader full-circle. If you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay was helpful in creating a new understanding.

**Example**

**Introduction**

From the parking lot, I could see the towers of the castle of the Magic Kingdom standing stately against the blue sky. To the right, the tall peak of The Matterhorn rose even higher. From the left, I could hear the jungle sounds of Adventureland. As I entered the gate, Main Street stretched before me with its quaint shops evoking an old-fashioned small town so charming it could never have existed. I was entranced. Disneyland may have been built for children, but it brings out the child in adults.

**Conclusion**

I thought I would spend a few hours at Disneyland, but here I was at 1:00 A.M., closing time, leaving the front gates with the now dark towers of the Magic Kingdom behind me. I could see tired children, toddling along and struggling to keep their eyes open as best they could. Others slept in their parents' arms as we waited for the parking lot tram that would take us to our cars. My forty-year-old feet ached, and I felt a bit sad to think that in a couple of days I would be leaving California, my vacation over, to go back to my desk. But then I smiled to think that for at least a day I felt ten years old again.

* **Challenging the reader:** By issuing a challenge to your readers, you are helping them to redirect the information in the paper, and they may apply it to their own lives.

**Example**

Though serving on a jury is not only a civic responsibility but also an interesting experience, many people still view jury duty as a chore that interrupts their jobs and the routine of their daily lives. However, juries are part of America's attempt to be a free and just society. Thus, jury duty challenges us to be interested and responsible citizens.

* **Looking to the future:** Looking to the future can emphasize the importance of your paper or redirect the readers' thought process. It may help them apply the new information to their lives or see things more globally.

**Example**

Without well-qualified teachers, schools are little more than buildings and equipment. If higher-paying careers continue to attract the best and the brightest students, there will not only be a shortage of teachers, but the teachers available may not have the best qualifications. Our youth will suffer. And when youth suffers, the future suffers.

* **Posing questions:** Posing questions, either to your readers or in general, may help your readers gain a new perspective on the topic, which they may not have held before reading your conclusion. It may also bring your main ideas together to create a new meaning.

**Example**

Campaign advertisements should help us understand the candidate's qualifications and positions on the issues. Instead, most tell us what a boob or knave the opposing candidate is, or they present general images of the candidate as a family person or God-fearing American. Do such advertisements contribute to creating an informed electorate or a people who choose political leaders the same way they choose soft drinks and soap?