

Introductions and Conclusions for a Thesis-Driven Essay

Introductions and conclusions play an important role in academic writing, especially if that writing is research or argumentative. Not all intros and conclusions are created equal, but these few tips can help you get started.

Introduction

This is your chance to make a first impression and engage your reader. What does your topic mean in the big picture? Think broad and give the reader a “sneak peek” into your essay; let them know what to expect.

1. Start with a hook, one to three sentences. This can be a question, a quote, a brief story, an interesting fact, a historical example, or anything that will capture the attention of your reader.
2. Introduce the topic or issue you will explore. You will most likely need a few sentences of context or background information to connect your hook to the specific issue you are discussing. This may include historical context, brief plot summary, or information about the author.
3. End with a thesis. This is the main argument of your paper in one or two sentences. Your thesis is the most specific and narrow part of your introduction, so naturally it should go at the end of your introduction.

Other Tips:

- Sometimes, writing the introduction last can be helpful.
- Avoid: “In this paper I will discuss...”, or overused dictionary definitions as your hook.

Conclusion

Conclusions provide you with an opportunity to remind your reader of the argument or topic you’ve discussed in your writing and to go beyond the prompt and relate your discussion to a larger context.

1. Restate the main argument or thesis statement of your paper in different words.
2. Briefly recap the supporting points of your thesis. If you have three body paragraphs, for example, consider writing one sentence of synthesis per body paragraph. Instead of just summarizing, tie your thoughts together.
3. At this point, you may want to revisit your hook or consider the following questions to leave your readers with an interesting thought to close:
 - ⇒ So what? Why should your readers care?
 - ⇒ What should your reader take away from the assignment?
 - ⇒ What are the implications of your argument?
 - ⇒ Are there areas for further discussion?

Other Tips:

- Avoid using terms like “In conclusion” to begin this section. It should be clear that you are wrapping up your paper.
- Avoid including new information that you find interesting, but did not have an opportunity to add it in your paper.

The Hourglass Analogy

It can be helpful to think about your paper in terms of an hourglass. Your intro should start broad, get more specific with your thesis and throughout the body, and then broad again in the conclusion.

