

Introductory Paragraphs

If you are unsure of how to organize an introductory paragraph, this is a good format to follow:

1. **“Hook”** (Be creative in capturing your audience’s attention)
2. **Background Information** (Or statements that connect the hook to the thesis)
3. **Thesis** (In most papers you write in college, the thesis is usually the last sentence of the intro paragraph, or towards the end)

Examples of Hooks

Personal Anecdote/Story

An interesting story can be a fun and creative way to start a paper and effective in getting your audience to care about your topic.

Asking a Question

If you use this method, make sure you ask questions that you can answer later.

Quotation or Paraphrase

If you are going to begin with a quotation, make sure it strongly relates to your argument. Don’t use a quotation if you could say the same thing in a few words by summarizing.

Unusual Fact or Statement

Avoid broad or bland statements. Instead, it can be effective to start with a surprising fact to get the audience to think about something in a different way.

What to Avoid

1. **Very general, broad, or vague statements.** It is okay to be specific and direct in the introduction. Make sure your introduction doesn’t just loosely relate to your topic, but strongly relates to and introduces your thesis.
2. **Overused statements:** “In today’s society...” “Since the beginning of time...”
3. **First person statements (unless specifically requested):** “In this paper I will...” “My paper will address...”

Organizing the Whole Paragraph

It can help to think of an introduction as a funnel, or the top of an hourglass. Start off with a broader idea in the hook and background information, then narrow the focus to your thesis.

(Hook) Is it true that bigger is always better? Could it be that society’s insatiable desire for more is, in many ways, giving people less? For small, local, family-owned business, more and bigger has been anything but better. **(Background)** While economic policies are often revised with big businesses in mind, smaller companies have difficulty making their voices heard. But these small businesses do have a large impact on their local economies. **(Specific Topic)** When big chain stores like Walmart come into communities like Green Hill, Oregon, they force out local family owned businesses, such as the Verner Brothers’ Grocery. **(Thesis)** The case study of Verner Brothers’ Grocery and its struggle to avoid bankruptcy after trying to keep up with the bigger chain stores demonstrates the extent to which the “bigger is better” mindset can upset local economies.

The hook grabs attention

Background info provides context

Introduce your **specific topic**

State your **thesis**