
Section Objectives:

- Students will be able to define the three types of paragraphs.
- Students will be able to identify and evaluate the effectiveness of various introduction strategies.
- Students will be able to construct body paragraphs that develop and support the main argument.
- Students will be able to construct concluding sections that synthesize rather than summarize information.

Although the thesis statement is the most important part of any paper, it cannot stand alone. Instead, it must be introduced and developed, using three different kinds of paragraphs.



The introduction of a paper is the writer's opportunity to make a good impression on the reader.

Introductory Paragraphs

The first paragraph of any formal composition is the introduction. This is the section of the paper that introduces the subject and sets the tone for the rest of the paper. Introductions should begin broadly and narrow to the thesis statement. Generally, the thesis statement is the last part of the introduction.

There are ten introduction strategies that can be used to structure the introduction and help establish the necessary formal and academic tone.

1. **Quotation:** In this type of introduction, begin with a quotation relevant to the topic and then relate the quotation to the overall thesis.
2. **Concession:** In this type of introduction, the writer begins by stating a position or opinion that opposes the one that will be argued.
3. **Paradox:** When using this strategy, the writer begins by stating something that does not seem like it can possibly be true, but is.
4. **Short anecdote or narrative:** This strategy allows the writer to share a short but relevant story and then relate that story to the thesis. This is different from background information in that it is written as a narrative, telling a story or giving an account of events in the order in which they happened.

5. **Interesting fact or statistic:** Here the writer uses a related fact or statistic to introduce the topic and the thesis.
6. **A series of questions:** This method of introduction asks a series of questions that the thesis statement and the composition will then answer.
7. **Relevant background information:** In this type of introduction, the author provides some factual information about the subject, often about its history, which both introduces the subject and leads to the thesis statement.
8. **Long-term effects without immediately stating the cause:** This introduction works backward to build up a bit of suspense before introducing the specific topic and thesis statement.
9. **Analogy:** This introduction uses a poetic comparison to introduce the subject and argument.
10. **Definition:** Here, the writer begins by defining a term or set of terms that will be important to the paper as a whole before introducing the thesis statement.

After the introduction, which ends with the thesis statement, the writer moves on to write the body paragraphs.

Body Paragraphs

The body paragraphs explain, develop, and support the thesis. There is no limit to the number of body paragraphs a paper can have, as long as each is well developed and supported. Body paragraphs should be at least three sentences long, but never longer than one typewritten page. Well-constructed body paragraphs have three main characteristics: They are unified, coherent, and adequately developed.

Unity means the state or condition of being one or whole. In terms of paragraphing, it means limiting each paragraph to only one main idea. Occasionally, a complex point may take more than one paragraph to explain, but there should never be more than one idea per paragraph. This idea should be identified in the topic sentence of the paragraph. The topic sentence can be thought of as a miniature thesis statement; it provides the main argument of the paragraph.

Coherence means to that the paragraph is logically consistent. Coherence in a paragraph can be achieved by remaining on one topic and using transitions between sentences. Using parallel structure, limiting pronoun usage, and using **pointing words** such as *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*, and *it* can also help a paragraph to be coherent.

Paragraphs develop the argument of the thesis. This is done by the use of concrete examples, using quotations and paraphrases, and analyzing those examples, quotations, and paraphrases.

Start new paragraphs whenever you introduce a new idea, to contrast ideas, or when the reader might need a visual break on the page. Introductory and concluding paragraphs are always separate paragraphs as well.

Concluding Paragraph

The concluding paragraph is the last chance a writer has to convince the reader of the importance or accuracy of his or her argument. The conclusion should synthesize the information provided in the rest of the paper, not summarize it. A good way to structure a conclusion is to restate the thesis (this means to repeat the thesis using different wording than was used in the introduction) and refer to the strategy with which the paper began. For example, if the paper began with a definition, the conclusion should return to that definition and show how it is even more relevant after the paper's analysis.

Practice

Identify the introduction strategy used in each of the following excerpts.

1. In her Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Toni Morrison states, "Language can never 'pin down' slavery, genocide, war. Nor should it yearn for the arrogance to be able to do so. Its force, its felicity is in its reach toward the ineffable" (par 18). Morrison's *Beloved* never shows such arrogance. Instead, through the character of Beloved, Morrison shows how the specter of slavery haunts and tortures American culture.
2. Many people have argued that Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is "just" a ghost story -- the tale of a child who is murdered by her mother, Sethe, and who returns as a punishment. Although this is one way to view the story, it ignores the fact that the ghost who returns does not haunt just Sethe but everyone connected to her. The specter is not, in fact, the ghost of the murdered child, but the memory of slavery itself which not only haunts and tortures Sethe and her loved ones but the community as a whole.
3. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is set in nineteenth-century America after the end of the Civil War. However, its message is directed firmly at modern American culture. In the book, Morrison illustrates how the ghost of slavery haunts and tortures American culture.
4. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is based on the true story of Margaret Garner, an escaped slave who killed her child rather than allowing her to be forced back into slavery. This seems hard to believe because the story seems so hard to believe. However, Morrison uses this scant background information to create a story that not only highlights the horrors of slavery but also provides commentary about the ways the history of American slavery affects current American culture.
5. Broken families, soaring poverty rates, traumatized men, women, and children wandering the country -- these are all the effects of slavery on nineteenth-century America. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* explores the ways slavery haunts and tortures not only former slaves and their descendants but also American culture as a whole.