

Lecture 2: The Introductory Paragraph or Introduction

The first paragraph in an essay is called the introductory paragraph. It is the beginning or the entrance of the essay. This paragraph is the most important, the essential, in the whole essay because most of the time the piece of writing is judged from its introduction. You should aim to interest your reader from the beginning and capture his attention. It will either stimulate the reader to read on or put him off. For such reason it should have the following characteristics:

1. It should introduce the topic by informing the reader of the topic being discussed.

2. It should indicate how the topic is going to be developed. Whether the essay is going to discuss causes, effects, reasons, examples,...
3. It should contain the thesis statement. It is arguably the most important component of the introduction. The thesis statement states the aim of the essay and may give insight into the author's examples and evidence.
4. It should be inviting and interesting enough to make the reader wants to continue reading the rest of the essay. So, it must then contain an attention grabber for the reader to attract his attention.

How can you grab the reader's attention?

To attract the reader's attention, here are some ideas:

- **A question:** You can start with a question. It should be asked in a creative way (provocative style); consequently, your reader will want to go on in his reading searching for the answer.
- **An anecdote:** You can start with a story that illustrates a point. Be sure your anecdote is short, to the point, and relevant to your topic. This can be a very effective opener for your essay, but use it carefully.
- **A dialogue:** An appropriate dialogue does not have to specify the speakers, but the reader must understand the point you are trying to convey. Use only two or three exchanges between speakers to make your point. Follow the dialogue with a sentence or two of elaboration.
- **Startling information:** This information must be true and verifiable, and it does not need to be totally new to your readers. It could be simply be a

pertinent fact that explicitly illustrates the point you wish to make. If you use a piece of startling information, follow it with a sentence or two of elaboration.

- ***Summary Information:*** A few sentences explaining your topic in general terms can lead the reader gently to your thesis. Each sentence should become gradually more specific, until you reach your thesis.