

Lecture 3: Parts of the Introduction

The introductory paragraph consists of two parts: a few general statements about your subject to attract your reader's attention and at the end there should be a specific one called a thesis statement, that states the specific subdivisions of your topic. A thesis statement for an essay is just like a topic sentence for a paragraph: It names the specific topic and the controlling ideas or major subdivisions of the topic. Ensure that the introduction moves from the general to the specific in regards to the topic and providing the reader with a "road map" of the essay in a logical order.

- **The General Statements**

The first statements in an introduction provide the reader with background information about the topic of the essay. The general statements should lead your reader from a very general idea of your topic to a very specific idea. The first general statement just introduces the topic, and then each sentence that follows is going to restrict the topic to a more specific one. These statements enlighten the reader's scope to the topic of the essay by providing him with the necessary information about the topic to be discussed, and at the same time through them, the writer can get the reader's attention.

- **The Thesis Statement**

The second part in an introduction is the thesis statement. Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It is the basis of the introductory paragraph which is, in its turn, the groundwork of your essay. The central idea or the thesis statement is the most important part, not only in the introduction but also in the whole essay, because this statement introduces the main idea of the essay. It expresses your opinion about a topic, your position. Your essay will take a position and will provide convincing evidence to support the point you are arguing. . The thesis statement is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. It is important to develop a working thesis early before you begin to organize your essay because it will help direct your thoughts and research; of course, your thesis may change as your writing progresses and you begin to incorporate new information.

The success of your introduction is based on the way you state your thesis: this is the formula of a good thesis statement:

TOPIC + OPINION + (SUBTOPICS) = THESIS STATEMENT

Note : The use of subtopics is optional but it is preferable to use them.

Examples:

TOPIC	+	OPINION	=	THESIS STATEMENT
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Animals	+	Dogs make better pets than cats	=	When it comes to animals, dogs make better pets than cats.
Movies and emotions	+	Titanic ignited many emotions	=	The movie "Titanic" ignited many emotions in an audience: fear, fidelity and sacrifice.

- The Characteristics of a Good Thesis Statement

The following features make a good and strong thesis statement:

- The thesis statement is a complete sentence, it can never be written as a question.
- The thesis statement states the main idea of the essay (it presents only one specific idea; not multiple ideas. It also should not contain two conflicting ideas).
- An ideal thesis statement includes the sub-topics (or predicators) that will be raised in the essay.
- The writer's opinion is included in the thesis statement.
- The thesis statement is neither too broad nor too narrow for the compass of your essay. It should never be so broad that it's difficult to discuss all relevant information. Similarly, it should never be too obvious to be worth arguing i.e. it is not a fact or a truism.
- The thesis statement should not be an open-ended question.
- The thesis statement may use specific correlative conjunctions such as (both....and, not only....but also, neither..... nor, either....or... etc.), or a colon (:).

- The thesis statement helps to organize the essay and gives its direction; it is the central idea around which the rest of the essay is built in a given pattern: comparison, definition, narration, description...etc.
- It should be the last sentence of the introductory paragraph or near the end.

Note: Having a good thesis statement helps both the writer and reader:

- For the writer, it helps to organize and develop the ideas of the essay.
- For the reader, it provides a guide or map to the essay.