

INTRODUCTIONS: WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN THEM?

There is no simple recipe for writing introductions to papers / theses / essays. But here are some guidelines. You can use your introduction to:

- Set the context – give some history or background (let the reader know who, what, when, where, why);
- Define some important terms (this works for new terms that are relevant to the topic, not dictionary definitions of well known words);
- Raise a question that you will answer in the rest of the text;
- State briefly the main points to be covered in your argument;
- Attract your reader's attention;
- State your approach or position, or **thesis**, on the topic

You can make your introduction more interesting by including:

- A quotation;
- An anecdote;
- An interesting fact (a statistic for instance);
- A definition;
- A glance at the opposition.

CONCLUSIONS: WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN THEM?

In your conclusion you can:

- Refer back to the title or introduction, to provide unity;
- Explain the importance of what you have just argued;
- Allude to the greater context of your argument;
- Draw out an inference;
- End with a quotation that neatly sums up your argument;
- Look to the future and suggest a good step to take next;
- Point out your limitations – what you have not been able to cover in the text or project;
- End with a glance to the readers, suggest that the next move is theirs;
- State your central argument.

*If adopting any of these devices, do so quietly; the aim is not to write a grand finale, but to complete or round out a discussion.

Avoid:

- Merely summarizing your work
- Try no to say 'In conclusion...'
- Do NOT introduce a new idea
- Do not apologise