

Guide to Writing Introductions and Conclusions

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First and last impressions are important in any part of life, especially in writing. This is why the introduction and conclusion of any paper - whether it be a simple essay or a long research paper - are essential. Introductions and conclusions are just as important as the body of your paper. What?!?! The introduction is what makes the reader want to continue reading your paper. The conclusion is what makes your paper stick in the reader's mind.

How do I write a good introduction? How do I write a conclusion that makes an impact?

These are some of the questions that you may ask yourself as you write. Don't worry, there are many ways to write both and you should choose the method that feels the most comfortable to you. Choose the style that fits your personality best.

Introductions

Suppose you are introducing a friend to your brother Joe. Would you say "Hey, Joe, this is Tina," and then walk away leaving them there together? Of course not! You would tell Joe a little about Tina's background: where she's from, where she went to school, where she works, and any other important information that will make Joe want to get to know Tina better, right? Well, introducing your paper to your reader is the exact same thing. You want the reader to want to know more about your paper. You want to get the reader interested in what you might have to say.

There are several ways to write a good introduction or opening to your paper.

Thesis Statement Opening

This is the traditional style of opening a paper. This is a "mini-summary" of your paper.

For example:

Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts college for deaf students in the world, is world-renowned in the field of deafness and education of the deaf. Gallaudet's charter was signed by President Abraham Lincoln. Gallaudet owes its rich history and fame to two men: Amos Kendall and Edward Miner Gallaudet.

Opening with a Story (Anecdote)

A good way of catching your reader's attention is by sharing a story that sets up your paper. Sharing a story gives a paper a more personal feel and helps make your reader comfortable.

This example was borrowed from Jack Gannon's The Week the World Heard Gallaudet (1989):

Astrid Goodstein, a Gallaudet faculty member, entered the beauty salon for her regular appointment proudly wearing her DPN button. ("I was married to that button that week!" she later confided.) When Sandy, her regular hairdresser, saw the button, he spoke and gestured, "Never! Never! Never!" Offended, Astrid turned around and headed for the door, but stopped short of leaving. She decided to keep her appointment, confessing

later that at that moment her sense of principles had lost out to her vanity. Later she realized that her hairdresser had thought she was pushing for a deaf U.S. President.

Specific Detail Opening

Giving specific details about your subject appeals to your reader's curiosity and helps establish a visual picture of what your paper is about.

For example:

Hands flying, green eyes flashing, and spittle spraying Jenny howled at her younger sister Emma. People walk by gawking at the spectacle as Jenny's grunts emanate through the mall. Emma sucks at her thumb trying to appear nonchalant. Jenny's blond hair stands almost on end. Her hands seemed to fly so fast that her signs could barely be understood. Jenny was angry. Very angry.

Open with a Quotation

Another method of writing an introduction is to open with a quotation. This method makes your introduction more interactive and more appealing to your reader.

For example:

"Deaf people can do anything except hear," President I. King Jordan stated in his acceptance speech as thousands of deaf students and staff of Gallaudet University cheered. President Jordan's selection as the first deaf president of a university proved to be a monumental event for Gallaudet University and for deaf people all over the world.

Open with an Interesting Statistic

Statistics that grab the reader help to make an effective introduction.

For example:

American Sign Language is the second most preferred foreign language in the United States. 50% of all deaf and hard of hearing people use ASL. ASL is beginning to be provided under the Foreign Language Department in many universities and high schools around the nation.*

*The statistics are not accurate. They were invented as an example.

Question Openings

Possibly the easiest opening is one that presents one or more questions to be answered in the paper. This is effective because questions are usually what the reader has in mind when he or she sees your topic.

For example:

Is ASL a language? Can ASL be written? Do you have to be born deaf to understand ASL completely? To answer these questions, one must first understand exactly what ASL is. In this paper, I attempt to explain this as well as answer my own questions.

Conclusions

The conclusion to any paper is the final impression that can be made. It is the last opportunity to get your point across to the reader and leave the reader feeling as if he or she learned something. Leaving a paper "dangling" without a proper conclusion can seriously devalue what was said in the body itself. Here

are a few effective ways to conclude or close your paper.

Summary Closing

Many times conclusions are simple re-statements of the thesis. Many times these conclusions are much like their introductions (see Thesis Statement Opening).

For example:

Because of a charter signed by President Abraham Lincoln and because of the work of two men, Amos Kendall and Edward Miner Gallaudet, Gallaudet University is what it is today - the place where people from all over the world can find information about deafness and deaf education. Gallaudet and the deaf community truly owe these three men for without them, we might still be "deaf and dumb."

Close with a Logical Conclusion

This is a good closing for argumentative or opinion papers that present two or more sides of an issue. The conclusion drawn as a result of the research is presented here in the final paragraphs.

For example:

As one can see from reading the information presented, mainstreaming deaf students isn't always as effective as educating them in a segregated classroom. Deaf students learn better in a more one-on-one basis like they can find in a school or program specially designed for them. Mainstreaming is just that; deaf students get lost in the mainstream.

Real or Rhetorical Question Closings

This method of concluding a paper is one step short of giving a logical conclusion. Rather than handing the conclusion over, you can leave the reader with a question that causes him or her to draw his own conclusions.

For example:

Why, then, are schools for the deaf becoming a dying species?

Close with a Speculation or Opinion

This is a good style for instances when the writer was unable to come up with an answer or a clear decision about whatever it was he or she was researching.

For example:

Through all of my research, all of the people I interviewed, all of the institutions I visited, not one person could give me a clear-cut answer to my question. Can all deaf people be educated in the same manner? I couldn't find the "right" answer. I hope you, the reader, will have better luck.

Close with a Recommendation

A good conclusion is when the writer suggests that the reader do something in the way of support for a cause or a plea for them to take action.

For example:

American Sign Language is a fast growing language in America. More and more universities and colleges are offering it as part of their curriculum and some are even

requiring it as part of their program. This writer suggests that anyone who has a chance to learn this beautiful language should grab that opportunity.