



Essay Writing

HOW TO WRITE AN INTRODUCTORY
PARAGRAPH – ATTENTION GRABBER

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LESSON OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson you should be able to:

- identify and explain parts of an essay introductory paragraph
- explain different ways of writing an introductory paragraph

The introduction

An introductory paragraph has 2 parts:

General statement

- Captures the reader's interest.
- Gives general information of the topic (attention-grabber).
- Focuses attention from attention-grabber to thesis (a transition).
- General topic sentences (2 or 3) which are more specific than the hook.

Thesis statement

- States the specific topic.
- May list subtopics or subdivisions.
- May indicate the pattern of organisation.
- Is normally the last sentence in the introductory paragraph.

Definition

Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a complete sentence that contains one main idea. This idea controls the content of the entire essay.

Take note of the location of a thesis statement in an introductory paragraph!

It's placed at the **END** of your introductory paragraph!

General topic sentences

Why do we need them?

- They keep the reader focused on the point of the essay.
- They serve as a transition between the **hook** and the **thesis statement**.

Key Features

Location

For most of my life I have lived with bad health, smelly clothes, and a chronic cough. My children and husband begged me to stop the habit that caused these conditions, but I could not. The habit of smoking had wrapped its addicting arms around me and was slowly strangling me. *Eventually, one day I realised I had to stop.* This realisation came after three terrifying events occurred in my family.

The **thesis statement** comes at the end of the introductory paragraph. This sentence tells the reader that he/she can expect to read about the events that caused the author to stop smoking in the rest of the essay.

Key feature

Sub-topics

A thesis statement that contains **sub-points** also helps a reader know how the essay will be organised.

Which thesis statement below contains sub-topics?

- 1) The large influx of people to Windhoek has had major effects on the city.
- 2) The large influx of people to Windhoek has had major effects on the ability of the city to provide housing, electricity, and jobs for all residents.

Key Features

Subtopics

The large influx of people to Windhoek has had major effects on the city.

No subtopics are named in this thesis statement.

subtopic #2

The large influx of people to Windhoek has had major effects on the ability of the city to provide housing, electricity, and jobs for all residents.

subtopic #1

subtopic #3

This statement names three subtopics.
Can you find all of the subtopics?

Key Features

Don't State the Obvious

In thesis statements, you should avoid using statements like, “This essay will discuss...” or “I’m going to write about...”

- Don't give too much information

- Don't write, “In this essay...”

- Don't write, “I’m going to tell you about...”

Try to write a thesis statement that captures your reader's attention without announcing your main topic and stating the obvious.

Key Features

Don't State the Obvious

~~In this essay, I am going to discuss
the effects of long-term drug abuse.~~

Long-term drug use can have
disastrous effects on one's marriage,
career, and health.

Ideas for attention grabbers:

- A startling statement
- A small story (anecdote)
- A quote
- A fact or statistics
- A question or series of questions
- An idiomatic/proverbial statement

Startling information:

- This information must be true and verifiable;
- it doesn't need to be totally new to your readers;
- It could 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.

Example of Startling information:

Child labour is one of the many instances of child abuse in this world. *There are a few countries in which this criminal practice is not practised. Instead of spending their childhood in a carefree and fun filled environment, children all over the world find themselves in situations where they are controlled and tormented by ruthless entrepreneurs.* **The main causes of child labour are three-fold.**

Anecdote

Poverty

You should not wonder what poverty is. Poverty is right in front of you. Here I am dirty, smelly and with no “proper” underwear on, and with the stench of my rotting teeth near you. *Listen to me and get first-hand information on poverty. Put yourself in my worn-out clothes and ill-fitting shoes; hear my voice asking for help and imagine being tired.*

Quote

When a writer uses the words of another to help illustrate a point

- Your quote should be unusual, funny, or obscure
- Don't choose a long quote
- Your quote should have a meaning you plan to reveal to the reader as the essay progresses
- Remember to put opening and closing quotation marks around your quote
- Include who said or wrote your quote

Quote

Poverty

"Steal or starve! It is never a sin to steal food." *This is a common claim I hear amongst my friends. I always wondered why they go to Shoprite and come back carrying food in their handbags, but not in Shoprite plastic bags. It took me quite some time, until I finally learned that poverty comes in different colours. Being poor means learning first hand the meaning of repossess, eviction and soup kitchen.*

Questions

Poverty

Have you ever slept on an empty stomach? Can you imagine taking a bath without soap? Do you know the feeling of walking bare feet? Can you smell poverty? *Do not look far away to get the answer. Look around you.* **If you see dirt, worn-out clothes and sad eyes looking at you, that is poverty.**

proverb

Poverty

My parents always told me to **live in gentle poverty**. *I never understood what they really meant. I always thought we were not that poor, for them to always remind me of poverty. I knew they could not afford to give me everything I asked, but when they gave me the little they had, they always told me to live in gentle poverty.* Today I understand that poverty means the lack of sufficient basics required for quality of life such as food, clothing and shelter.

Facts or Statistics

- *Poverty is inevitable in today's life.* **Half the people in the world are trying to manage below the poverty level of two dollars a day. Almost one person in five is living in extreme poverty, surviving on the equivalent of less than one dollar a day. More than a quarter of the inhabitants of developing countries still have nothing to live on. People who are jobless, have no access to education, or homeless are the sign of poverty.**

Example of hook with a Surprising Statement:

If you wanted to inform parents of ways to protect their children and prevent accidents:

Do you have a minute? Good! That is may be all it takes to save the life of a child — your child. *Accidents kill nearly 8,000 children under age of 15 each year. And for every fatality, 42 more children are admitted to hospitals for treatment. **Yet, such deaths and injuries can be avoided through these easy steps parents can take right now.***

In recent years many people have become increasingly aware of the need for physical fitness. Almost everywhere people turn, whether it is to a newsstand, television or billboard, advice for guarding and improving health bombards them. Although much of this advice is commercially motivated by those eager to sell vitamins, natural foods and reducing gimmick, some of it, especially that advocating a regular exercise program, merits serious attention. Such a program, if it consists of at least thirty minutes three times a week and if a person's physician approves it, provides numerous benefits. Regular exercise releases tension, improves appearance, and increases stamina.

- **What idea for attention grabber was used in this paragraph?**
- **What will each paragraph in this essay be about?**

Paragraph #1: _____

Paragraph #2: _____

Paragraph #3: _____

- "A dog is man's best friend." That common saying may contain some truth, but dogs are not the only animal friend whose companionship people enjoy. For many people, a cat is their best friend. Despite what dog lovers may believe, cats make excellent house-pets as they are good companions, they are civilised members of the household, and they are easy to care for.

- 1) What idea for attention grabber was used in this paragraph?**
- 2) What will each paragraph in this essay be about?**

Paragraph #1:

Paragraph #2:

Paragraph #3:

