Introduction Paragraph & Thesis Statement

An **introduction paragraph** or **thesis paragraph** introduces your thesis argument and previews for the reader the major arguments you will make to prove your thesis in the essay.

The introduction paragraph should contain:

1. an introduction to the text;
2. a hook;
3. and a thesis statement

What is a hook?

A hook sets up certain expectations, which grab the reader's attention and make the reader want to continue reading.

In an academic essay, this is a nice opportunity to be a little imaginative with your writing because the rest of your essay is (or should be) mainly analytical .

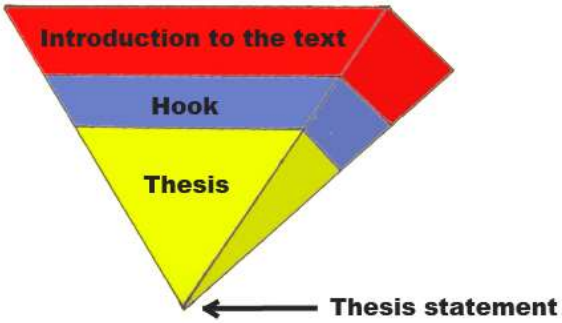
Introduction Paragraph Structure:

The introduction paragraph should be structured like an **inverted pyramid** – that is, wide at the top, and narrow at the bottom. This means that while you may start out in broad terms (for example introducing the text as relative to your general argument), as you move towards the end of the paragraph you should become increasingly specific.

Your central argument will be expressed in precise terms at the end of the paragraph – that is, your **thesis statement**.

The introduction paragraph should:

- orient the reader with the text relative to your topic/argument;
- identify the focus or purpose of the essay;
- and outline/overview the means by which you will prove your argument.



Example Introduction Paragraph
from Lunsford, "Writing for the Humanities" p. 531:

"Life's Not a Paragraph"

Throughout his poetry, E. E. Cummings leads readers deep into a thicket of scrambled words, missing punctuation, and unconventional structure. Within Cummings's poetic bramble, ambiguity leads the reader through what seems at first a confusing and winding maze. However, this confusion actually transforms into a path that leads the reader to the center of the thicket where Cummings's message lies: readers should not allow their experience to be limited by reason and rationality. In order to communicate his belief that emotional experience should triumph over reason, Cummings employs odd juxtapositions, outlandish metaphors, and inversions of traditional grammatical structures that reveal the illogic of reason. Indeed, by breaking down such formal boundaries, Cummings's poems "since feeling is first" and "as freedom is a breakfastfood" suggest that emotion, which provides the compositional fabric for our experience of life, should never be defined or controlled.

Introduction to the text

Hook

Thesis statement

Thesis statement:

The **thesis statement** itself is an argument that sums up your observations and interpretations of the text. Usually, you can establish an argument only when a possible counter-argument may be made; therefore, make sure your argument is not too vague or obvious.

Make sure of the following:

- Your thesis contains an **argument** (e.g. it could be contested). It is not **obvious.**
- Your thesis is not too **broad**.
- Your thesis does not express a **personal judgment** that is obvious, irrelevant or inappropriate.
- Your thesis does not contain a **logical fallacy**, such as:
    - an attempt to **tie together two or more logically unrelated ideas** as though they were related.
    - treating a debatable statement as through it were unequivocally true (often the case with **generalizations**).