

The Introductory Paragraph

A good introduction should do **two** things:

1. Capture your reader's interest (**Motivator**)
2. Tell your reader what your main idea (**Thesis**) is and how you will develop it. (**Blueprint**)

As you practice writing and look carefully at the writing of others, you'll find many good ways to motivate your reader. Here are three good ways that we'll discuss in this chapter:

- **the opposite opinion**
- **a brief story**
- **an interesting statement**

Opposite Opinion

An easy way to begin your paper is to state the opinion your paper opposes followed by a transition to your thesis statement with blueprint. In other words, your introduction has this flow to it:

- what the opposition says
- transition
- what you say

Transitions with the Opposite Opinion

The transition is particularly important in this kind of introduction because you must move clearly from the position you oppose to the position you support. Here's a sample introduction to an essay showing that smoking is a disgusting habit:

Some people think that smoking makes them appear sophisticated and mysterious, perhaps even seductive. They become Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* or Lauren Bacall in *To Have and Have Not*. Those people, however, are wrong. As far as I am concerned, smoking is really a disgusting habit—messy, irritating to others, and even harmful to nonsmokers.

Notice the strong transition ("Those people, however, are wrong.") And notice that the thesis statement and blueprint are obvious. Readers know clearly they have read the main idea of the paper and how it will be developed.

Here is another introduction using the opposite opinion as the motivator:

As I was walking down the hall yesterday, I overheard a professor complaining about computers: "Those things are going to ruin the writing of our students. A computer is just a fancied-up TV and arcade game disguised as an 'educational tool.'" But my experience with computers is entirely different. As word processors, for example, they can be immensely helpful with each stage of the writing process: prewriting, writing, and rewriting.

Brief Story or anecdote

We all enjoy stories, so one of the most interesting ways to begin a paper is to tell your readers a brief story somehow related to your thesis statement. In that way, you engage their attention right from the start. By the

time they've finished the story, sheer momentum carries them into the rest of your paper. Here's a sample introduction that begins with a brief story:

I walked into the living room, picked up a magazine, and settled back into my chair. When I opened the cover, I was confronted by the image of a slender, elegant woman staring confidently into the distance and holding a cigarette in one hand. "Smoke cigarettes," she seemed to be saying, "and you, too, can be slender and elegant." I wanted so much to be like her. But I never took up smoking because—elegance and slenderness notwithstanding—I've always thought of it as a disgusting habit: messy, irritating to others, and even harmful to nonsmokers.

Notice that the introduction has a transition ("But I never took up . . .") between the motivator and thesis with blueprint.

Some introductions need a transition—like the one above, and all those that begin with opposite opinions—whereas others move smoothly from the motivator to the thesis with blueprint without any explicit transition words:

I remember the first time I used a computer—or "word processor"—to do some writing. I was at a neighbor's house, so I just began a "letter" (one I wasn't planning to mail) to a friend. Instead of pausing frequently to think of things to say, I just wrote. The words seemed to come easily because I knew I could make changes later with no problem. Since then, I've used computers for most of my writing, and I've come to believe that they can be immensely helpful to us at each stage in the writing process: prewriting, writing, and rewriting.

Interesting Statement

Another easy way to get your reader's attention is to begin with a statement that's interesting, either because the idea is intriguing or because, perhaps, the tone is angry. The introduction to the five-paragraph essay in Chapter 9 begins with an interesting statement, one that's intriguing: "Do you realize that newly born children are not even aware that parts of their bodies belong to them?"

The next example is a motivator that's interesting because the tone is angry (after all, if we're walking along and hear somebody yelling, we would probably stop because we're curious):

I'm sick of smokers flicking ashes on my desk and throwing ashes on the rug. Long after these people have left, their messes remain, together with the foul smoke they have exhaled from their tar-coated lungs. Let's face facts: smoking is a disgusting habit-messy, irritating, and even harmful to nonsmokers.

The following example is only two sentences long and shows that an introduction can be effective even if it's short:

Computers can really make a difference in how quickly and how easily you can get words on paper. In fact, computers-used as word processors-can be immensely helpful with each stage of the writing process: prewriting, writing, and rewriting.

The motivator for this introduction is interesting because the writer seems enthusiastic. If you convey your enthusiasm for your topic, your beginning most likely will be interesting, too. When you are writing the introduction to your paper—whether you choose the opposite opinion, a brief story, or an interesting

statement—be sure you fulfill the two important purposes of all introductions: **interest your readers** and **tell them the main idea of your paper (and how you will develop it)**.

Concluding Paragraph

The conclusion, like the introduction, serves two purposes in an essay:

- It reminds the reader of the main point of your essay. (**Reworded thesis statement**)
- It gives the reader a sense of finality. (**Clincher**)

The part that reminds the reader of the main point is the reworded thesis statement. The part that gives finality is the clincher. Below is the conclusion to the sample five-paragraph essay you saw in Chapter 9. Locate the reworded thesis and the clincher.

Conclusion of a Five-Paragraph Essay

Little children are funny creatures to watch, aren't they? But as we laugh, we have to admire, too, because the humorous mistakes are but temporary side trips that children take on the amazingly complicated journey to maturity—a long way from the beginning, where they lay in wonder, silently watching the strange, fingered spacecraft passing back and forth before their infant eyes.

The **reworded thesis** is the first sentence; the **clincher** is the last one. You already know how to write a reworded thesis statement: it resembles the reworded topic sentence that you worked with on the one-paragraph essay. Therefore, this chapter concentrates on the clincher. We'll discuss two types:

- the reference to the motivator
- the interesting statement

The simplest—and most common—clincher reminds the readers of the motivator you used in your introduction. This clincher has the advantage of bringing the paper full circle, an unmistakable signal that the paper is over

THE REFERENCE TO THE MOTIVATOR

The previous section showed you three sample introductions with the thesis that smoking is disgusting. Let's look at those introductions again. Notice that each conclusion:

- begins with a reworded thesis statement
- finishes by referring to the motivator

Introduction to Essay 1 (**opposite opinion**)

Some people think that smoking makes them appear sophisticated and mysterious, perhaps even seductive. They become Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* or Lauren Bacall in *To Have and Have Not*. Those people, however, are wrong. As far as I am concerned, smoking is really a disgusting habit—messy, irritating to others, and even harmful to nonsmokers.

Conclusion to Essay 1

I am glad I never began such a disgusting habit, and I wish others had not started, either. I hope my sophisticated friends soon find out that Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall were mysterious and appealing in spite of their habit, not because of it.

Introduction to Essay 2 (**brief story**)

I walked into the living room, picked up a magazine, and settled back into my chair. When I opened the cover, I was confronted by the image of a slender, elegant woman staring confidently into the distance and holding a cigarette in one hand. "Smoke cigarettes," she seemed to be saying, "and you, too, can be slender and elegant." I wanted so much to be like her. But I never took up smoking because—elegance and slenderness notwithstanding—I've always thought of it as a disgusting habit: messy, irritating to others, and even harmful to nonsmokers.

Conclusion to Essay 2

I am glad I never began such a disgusting habit, and I wish others hadn't started, either. I no longer have the magazine with the elegant woman. But I don't miss her, the magazine, or smoking.

Introduction to Essay 3 (**interesting statement**)

I'm sick of smokers flicking ashes on my desk and throwing ashes on the rug. Long after these people have left, their messes remain, together with the foul smoke they have exhaled from their tar-coated lungs. Let's face facts: smoking is a disgusting habit—messy, irritating, and even harmful to nonsmokers.

Conclusion to Essay 3

I'm glad I never began such a disgusting habit. If other people hadn't started smoking, then neither their houses nor mine would be littered with smokers' messes, and we would all be healthier.

The previous chapter showed you how to begin papers with interesting statements; an interesting statement is a good way to end a paper, too. Your statement might be interesting because of the information or because of the tone.

Here's a conclusion that includes a statement interesting for its information:

I am glad I never began such a disgusting habit, and I wish others had not started, either. I hope my sophisticated friends soon find out that Humphrey Bogart, mysterious and appealing though he might have been, unfortunately died of cancer of the throat—possibly caused by smoking.

And here's a conclusion with an interesting—even angry—tone:

I am glad I never began such a disgusting habit, and I wish others had not started, either. Then the only smoking would take place at the fire-eater's show at the carnival—a spectacle that would give smoking the kind of dignity it deserves.

To finish your five-paragraph essay, simply reword the thesis statement and end with unmistakable finality: the clincher.

When you write your conclusion, be careful not to state any new, unsupported generalizations that your reader might question.