

# INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In academic essays, introductions and conclusions are the first and last impression of your paper

Much like in real life, you should always leave a good first and last impression to make your paper stand out!

# THE 3 PARTS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION

► So what should an engaging and effective introduction do?

1. Get the reader interested and engaged in the general topic (“hook”)
2. Go from “general” to “more specific” (narrow down your topic so that you can introduce a thesis statement without too much of an abrupt jump between hook and the specifics of your paper)
3. Give your thesis statement (what your paper will explain or argue and the main points)

# SAMPLE INTRODUCTION

- Read the following introduction and decide where the hook ends, where the writer begins to “narrow,” and what the thesis statement is.

Celebrating the revolution, French citizens sent King Louie to the guillotine. Every Halloween day in ancient Rome, criminals were executed in the city square. In the 1880s, in an effort to prevent crime in the US, hundreds of bank robbers, horse thieves, and murderers were hanged in front of the public. However, in the last half of the 20th century, the death penalty has faced increasing opposition. Many people, especially members of churches, are against capital punishment, and most advanced countries have eliminated the death penalty. While it is true that the death penalty has some negative points, it is still a powerful and useful tool. Therefore, our society should keep the death penalty to deter crime, to give fairness to victims and their families, and to punish inhumane criminals.

- ▶ **HOOK:** Celebrating the revolution, French citizens sent King Louie to the guillotine. Every Halloween day in ancient Rome, criminals were executed in the city square. In the 1880s, in an effort to prevent crime in the US, hundreds of bank robbers, horse thieves, and murderers were hanged in front of the public.
- ▶ **NARROW:** However, in the last half of the 20th century, the death penalty has faced increasing opposition. Many people, especially members of churches, are against capital punishment, and most advanced countries have eliminated the death penalty. While it is true that the death penalty has some negative points, it is still a powerful and useful tool.
- ▶ **THESIS:** Therefore, our society should keep the death penalty to deter crime, to give fairness to victims and their families, and to punish inhumane criminals.

## PART 1: THE HOOK (WAYS TO GET THE READER INTERESTED)

- ▶ The “hook” is the first part of your introduction - it should engage the reader, but not argue or explain anything related to your writing assignment!

# PART 1: THE HOOK (WAYS TO GET THE READER INTERESTED)

► Use different techniques to engage the reader:

## 1. Use a quotation or surprising fact

For example, in a paper about the death penalty:

▫ Every year, 189 prisoners in the US are executed for violent crimes...

## 2. Ask a question or describe a problem, dilemma, or controversy associated with your paper

For example, in a paper about the reasons for committing suicide:

▫ What would you do if you were diagnosed with a terminal illness?

# NARROWING DOWN YOUR TOPIC

- What is **wrong** with this introduction? How could you **fix** it?

One Christmas, my father bought a new set of lights for the Christmas tree. He bought them very late, on the 23rd of December, so we did not decorate our tree until the 24th of December. However, we all became very sad when we found out that the lights were defective and would not light up. Our family had no time to buy more lights, and as a result we had a Christmas tree without lights that year. Consumer protection laws are necessary to ensure that buyers have confidence in the goods they purchase, to enforce retail standards, and to provide greater product safety.

- Right - the thesis statement is too abrupt! Make a smooth transition from “hook” to thesis statement:

One Christmas, my father bought a new set of lights for the Christmas tree. He bought them very late, on the 23rd of December, so we did not decorate our tree until the 24th of December. However, we all became very sad when we found out that the lights were defective, and would not light up. There was no time to buy more lights, and we had a Christmas tree without lights that year. **Like the majority of consumers, my family had placed a blind trust in the products available for purchase in stores, but this trust is often misguided. A lack of legal protection laws allows for low-quality products to be sold by retailers, and this has a number of other negative effects on the country's economy.** Thus, consumer protection laws are necessary to ensure that buyers can have confidence in the goods they purchase, to enforce more consistent retail standards, and to facilitate greater product safety.



# AN EFFECTIVE THESIS STATEMENT

- ▶ A thesis statement is in many ways the most important sentence that you will write in any paper. It is like a foundation to your essay - it helps you (and the reader!) stay focused:
  - ✓ gives the main idea of the entire essay
  - ✓ suggests the topic for each body paragraph
  - ✓ commonly has three parts
  - ✓ avoids 1st person expressions like “I’m going to talk about...”
  - ✓ the supporting points should be logically connected to your thesis or argument
- ▶ Example: To become a more inviting campus, Bahria College should **expand its cafeteria**, **offer student housing**, **and offer childcare**.

# WRITING AN EFFECTIVE THESIS STATEMENT

- ▶ Given the thesis statement below, how many paragraphs do you expect in the body of the essay? What will the writer talk about first, second, and last?

Thus, consumer protection laws are necessary <sup>1</sup>to ensure that buyers can have confidence in the goods they purchase, <sup>2</sup>to enforce more consistent retail standards, and <sup>3</sup>to facilitate greater product safety.

- ▶ **HINT:** When writing your essay, repeatedly go back to your thesis statement to make sure you are staying focused.
- ▶ The supporting points in your thesis statement must be reflected in the essay's body paragraphs!

## Model Essay One - introductory paragraph

### Keys to a Successful Essay

Many students find essay writing difficult and frustrating.<sup>1</sup> They know what they want to say, but when it comes to expressing themselves through the essay medium, they encounter problems.<sup>2</sup> Not only do they have to address the complexities of their topic, but they also have to follow the conventions of the formal academic essay.<sup>3</sup> The task seems daunting.<sup>4</sup> Broken down into its basic components, however, essay writing is not so difficult.<sup>5</sup> In fact, by addressing three key elements, every student can write an effective essay.<sup>6</sup> These three key elements are focus, organisation, and clarity.<sup>7</sup>

# ANALYSIS OF INTRODUCTION:

- ▶ The **first six sentences** in this introductory paragraph prepare the reader for the thesis statement in sentence 7 that the three key elements of a successful essay are ‘**focus, organisation, and clarity.**’

- ▶ **Sentence 1** makes the generalisation that students ‘find essay writing difficult and frustrating’
- ▶ **Sentences 2 and 3** expand on this generalisation.
- ▶ **Sentence 4** reinforces the idea of difficulty.
- ▶ **Sentence 5** turns the paragraph away from the difficulties of essay writing towards a way of addressing the difficulties by breaking the essay into components. (*The word ‘however’ signals this change of direction.*)
- ▶ **Sentence 6** suggests that there are three of these components, preparing the way for the thesis statement that ‘focus, organisation, and clarity’ are these components.

## PARTS OF CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Conclusions are in many ways similar to introductions:
  - ✓ They do not present new relevant information.
  - ✓ Instead, they guide the reader away from the essay.

# CONCLUSION:

- ▶ Conclusions have two components:
  1. A final analysis or interpretation of the paper. Either restate your thesis or sum up the general meaning of your overall argument, explanation, or description.
  2. An ending comment, such as an interesting idea or your personal interpretation of the entire paper.

# The Concluding Paragraph:

- ▶ The concluding paragraph completes the frame around the essay's argument, which was opened in the introductory paragraph.
- ▶ The conclusion
  - ✓ Begins by restating the thesis
  - ✓ Should be a mirror image of the first paragraph
  - ✓ Sums up the essay as a whole
  - ✓ Leaves the reader with a sense of completion.



## Model Essay One - concluding paragraph

Clearly then, focus, organisation, and clarity are the three key elements of a successful essay.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the content must also be sound and the essay must appropriately meet the requirements of the assignment brief, but this is not enough to gain the highest grades.<sup>2</sup> Student essay writers must therefore work at developing strong thesis statements, planning the structure of their essays, and writing clearly and concisely.<sup>3</sup> Essay writing is never easy, but by addressing the three key elements of focus, organisation, and clarity, every student can succeed.<sup>4</sup>

# ANALYSIS OF CONCLUSION:

- ▶ **Sentence 1** restates the thesis that focus, organisation, and clarity are the key elements of a successful essay. The phrase 'Clearly then' implies that, having read the case for focus, organisation, and clarity being identified as the 'key elements', the reader agrees with the thesis.
- ▶ **Sentence 2** acknowledges the importance of the essay's content but asserts that sound content isn't enough for success.
- ▶ **Sentence 3** sums up the points made in the middle three paragraphs.
- ▶ **Sentence 4** restates the generalisation the essay started with - that students find essay writing difficult - but then ends on a high note with the prediction that addressing the key elements discussed in the middle paragraphs will ensure success.



The concluding paragraph picks up on the wording used in the introductory paragraph.

The introduction leads the reader in; the conclusion leads the reader out.

