**Writing Introductions**

An INTRODUCTION is a special paragraph at the beginning of an essay which serves important functions:

* It contains the thesis statement of the essay, usually presented at the end of the introduction.
* It tries to capture the attention of the reader so that he or she is interested in reading the whole essay.

**Parts of an Introductory Paragraph**

1. Hook (information that will get the reader’s attention)
2. Transition (a word, phrase, or sentence(s) between the hook and the thesis sentence that clearly relates the hook to the thesis so that the reader understands the connection)
3. Thesis Statement

**Sample Introductory Paragraph**

HOOK: One morning a young mother had her seven-month old son in his stroller under the peach tree near their family swimming pool.  She walked to her kitchen to get a knife so she could peel a peach for him.  Ten seconds later, she found him face down with the stroller at the bottom of the pool.  She immediately pulled him out and administered artificial respiration to her son.  TRANSITION: If she had been gone any longer, he might have become one of the statistics that plague our country every year when many children die needlessly in water-related accidents.  THESIS: These child drownings could, however, be greatly reduced if parents never left their children unattended around water, if pools were properly fenced, and if other safety devices were installed in or by the pool.

**Common Methods of Introduction**

**1. General to Specific (the Funnel Introduction).**Begin with a broad, general statement of your topic and narrow it down to your thesis statement.  This type of introduction is by far the most common used for academic writing.  The following introduction moves from a general discussion of diets to the thesis statement which concerns a specific diet, the "Palm Beach" diet.

HOOK: Bookstore shelves today are crammed with dozens of different diet books.  The American public seems willing to try any sort of diet, especially the ones that promise instant, miraculous results.  And authors are more than willing to invent new fad diets to cash in on this craze.  TRANSITION: Unfortunately, some of these fad diets are ineffective or even unsafe.  One of the worst fad diets is the "Palm Beach" plan.  THESIS: It is impractical, doesn't achieve the results it claims, and is a sure route to poor nutrition.

**2. Contrast to the thesis statement. (Turn about Introduction).**Start with an idea or situation that is the opposite of the one you will develop.  This approach works because your readers will be surprised, and then intrigued, by the contrast between the opening idea and the thesis which follows it.

HOOK: When I decided to return to school at age thirty-five, I wasn't at all worried about my ability to do the work.  After all, I was a grown woman who had raised a family, not a confused teenager fresh out of high school.  TRANSITION: But when I started classes, I realized that those "confused teenagers" sitting around me were in much better shape for college than I was.  They still had all their classroom skills in bright, shiny condition, while mine had grown rusty from disuse.  THESIS: I had to learn how to locate information in a library, how to write a report, and even how to speak up in class discussions.

**3. Incident or story. (Dramatic Entrance)**A brief story in your introduction will grab the reader's attention.  Make sure the story is related to your thesis.  The incident or story can be something that happened to you, something you have heard about, or something you have read about in a newspaper or magazine.

HOOK: Early Sunday morning the young mother dressed her little girl warmly and gave her a candy bar, a picture book, and a stuffed rabbit.  Together, they drove downtown to a church.  There the mother told the little girl to wait on the stone steps until children began arriving for Sunday school.  Then the young mother drove off, abandoning her five-year-old because she couldn't cope with being a parent anymore.  TRANSITION:  This incident is one of thousands of cases of child neglect and abuse that occur annually.  Perhaps the automatic right to become a parent should no longer exist.  THESIS:  Would-be parents should be forced to apply for parental licenses for which they would have to meet three important conditions.

**4. Quotation.**A quotation can be something you have read in a book or article, something you have heard (a popular saying, a proverb), an advertising slogan ("Just do it"), or a favorite expression used by family or friends ("My father always says . . .").

HOOK: "Fish and visitors," wrote Benjamin Franklin, "begin to smell after three days."  TRANSITION: Last summer, when my sister and her family came to spend their two-week vacation with us, I became convinced that Franklin was right.  THESIS: After only three days of my family's visit, I was thoroughly sick of my brother-in-law's corny jokes, my sister's endless complaints about her boss, and their children's constant invasions of our privacy.