Opening and Closing Essays

**Opening an Essay**

A good opening paragraph usually satisfies several requirements:

* It focuses readers’ attention on your subject and arouses their curiosity about what you have to say.
* It specifies what your topic is and implies your attitude.
* Often it states your thesis sentence.
* It is concise and sincere.

**Some strategies for opening paragraphs:**

* State the subject.
* Use a quotation.
* Relate an incident.
* Ask a question.
* State an opinion.
* Make a historical comparison of contrast.
* Create an image.
* Describe a problem or a dilemma.

The most common introduction from a kind of a funnel:

It starts with a statement or question about the subject,

And then, it asserts the central idea of the essay.

It clarifies or narrows the subject in one or more sentences,

Opening paragraphs to **avoid**

* **Don’t reach back too far** with vague generalities or truths: “throughout human history…” or “In today’s world …” You may need a warm-up paragraph to start drafting, but your readers can do without it.
* **Don’t start with “The purpose of this essay is …,”** or “In this essay I will…” or any similar flat announcement of your intention or topic.
* **Don’t refer to the title of the essay in the first sentence: “**This is my favorite activity” or “This is a big problem.”
* **Don’t start with “According to Webster …” or a similar phrase leading to a dictionary definition.** A definition can be effective springboard to an essay, but this kind of lead0in has become dull with overuse.
* **Don’t** apologize for your opinion or for inadequate knowledge with “I’m not sure if I’m right, but I think …; “I don’t know much about this, but …” or similar lines.

**Closing an Essay**

Usually set off with its own paragraph, the conclusion may consist of a sigle sentence or a group of sentences.

It may take one or more of these approaches:

* Create an image.
* Strike a note of hope or despair.
* Use a quotation.
* Give a symbolic or powerful face or other detail.
* Recommend a course of action.
* Summarize the paper.
* Echo the introduction.
* Restate the thesis in a fresh way.

Closing paragraphs to **avoid**

* **Don’t** conclude more than you reasonably can from the evidence you have presented. If the essay is about your frustrating experience trying to clear a parking ticket, you cannot reasonably conclude that all local police forces are tired up in red tape.
* **Don’t** apologize for your essay or otherwise cast doubt on it.