
Strategies for Writing Effective Introductions & Conclusions

Craft an Effective Hook: Write several sentences to begin your introduction that quickly “hook,” your readers’ attention & compel them to keep reading. Begin with a strategically chosen, compelling, and interesting quotation, question, anecdote, or even a well-crafted sentence. An effective hook will help establish Motive. You can then address motive to spell out the tension (paradox, oversight, challenge to an accepted view, positive or negative consequence, or stakes of the argument you propose.

Narrative Hook: A story or anecdote using specific details and precise, succinct diction to describe a scenario relevant to your topic, *Motive*, and *Thesis*.

Scholarly Hook: An interesting (& relevant!) statistic, fact or quotation used to establish credibility.

Quotation Hook: Start with an interesting quotation that establishes your authority on the subject.

Descriptive Hook: Appeals to readers’ senses or sense of imagery with a focused & detailed description of an image or scene using specific & succinct diction.

Direct Address Hook: Uses the pronoun “you” to address readers & invite them into the conversation.

Example Hook: Introduce an example that connects to your essay’s focus from personal observation or experience, but must be relevant to both the topic and overall argument.

Profound Question Hook: A thought-provoking, open-ended question that invites reader participation.

Provocative Detail Hook: Allude to a provocative or strange detail from a source to spark interest.

Audience/Societal Assumptions Hook: Start with common assumptions you believe to be misguided, old-fashioned, outdated, biased, etc., that will you plan to address in your argument.

Avoid...

Snore: Boring readers with vague generalizations about how long ago an event occurred or how along ago an overly-generalized and homogenous group...blah, blah, blah (yawn)

Maze: The writer hasn’t thought through—or thought about—the argument. Uncertainty about topic & argument focus causes the introduction, etc. to meander in a circle of disconnected “dead-end” details, generalizations, observations, or tangents: a maze. Ideas don’t cohere or make sense.

Obvious: Matter-of-fact comments, cliché, or platitudes that don’t develop the introduction or lead to a focused argument but that merely rephrase another argument, state a fact that is neither arguable nor debatable—or both.

Hyperbole: Exaggeration or heavy drama shocks, overwhelms, alienates, or offends readers.

Vacuum: The *Thesis* (and, therefore, the argument) is disconnected from context, motive, and focus—even sources. The writer hasn’t “entered into a conversation”: it’s like the ideas are in a vacuum.

Generalization: Diction is too abstract, vague, and the prose generalizes; as a result readers, and often even the writer, have no idea what you are really writing about.

Saying Absolutely Nothing Profoundly: Style Over Substance: Thesaurus-infused diction, purple prose, long-winded, digressive sentences that border on esoteric & cryptic; subterfuge; trying too hard to impress readers. The words might sound pretty, but the prose doesn’t say anything.

Writing Complex Conclusions

Motive—Take it Up a Notch: Revisit the motive you established in the introduction: the “So what?” Who cares?” Emphasize or re-emphasize what the implications are, “what’s at stake?”

Context: Re-contextualize your argument or the issues you discussed in the paper.

Extended Metaphor: Extend or expand your argument or analysis, literally or figuratively, so that you take the conversation into a new, but relevant direction.

Logical Conclusion: Actually “conclude” or synthesize new meaning from your argument.

Citation Spectrum: Include a catchy phrase, a brief quotation, or anecdote.

Come Full Circle: Return to the hook you started with in the introduction and extend it into the conclusion. What more can you say now that you’ve made your argument?

The Grand Finale: End strongly or with a flourish! In other words: Have the last word!