

Introductions



An introduction engages your audience, establishes the context for your work, and leads to your main idea or thesis. Make use of the principles and practical tips provided in this handout, but remember to tailor your writing to your audience and assignment.

Engage Readers and Set the Tone

- Make your writing enjoyable to read, and capture your audience’s interest and attention as you establish the context for your work. This may require you to determine, clarify, and research who your audience is, so you can connect with them.
- Consider what your audience may already know. Is your information new to them, or is it a review?
- Establish an appropriate tone for your writing. For example, when writing an academic paper, you will typically use a more formal tone. Read widely within your field to better understand the most suitable tone for your work.

Establish the Context for Your Work

- Place your argument in the context of established knowledge. To do this, research what others are saying on the topic, noting areas scholars may not have discussed that your work will address.
- Provide a framework for your ideas and engage your audience by providing the historical background, a relevant story or example, a comparison, an opposing viewpoint, a poignant quote, a surprising statistic or piece of data, a quick overview of the topic, etc. Read writing within your field to determine what will be most appropriate and inviting for your audience.
- Incorporate sources or examples if needed, but make sure they don’t overwhelm or lead readers away from your own writing and ideas.
- Define, if necessary, any terms that are essential to your thesis or main claim.

Lead to the Thesis or Main Idea

- Build toward the thesis or main idea of your work by starting with your general topic then narrowing down to your specific perspective—your thesis.
- Incorporate and emphasize only information that is relevant to your thesis and to the rest of your work. Try writing an outline or draft of your entire paper before you begin your introduction to have a clear idea of the concepts you need to present, and revisit your introduction after you finish your work to make sure the introduction and thesis or main idea match the body and conclusion of your work.

