

Introductory paragraph

An essay introduction stimulates the readers' attention and informs them about the topic of the essay. Considering these four purposes of the introductory paragraph helps you get started.

- It introduces the topic of the essay
- It gives the general background of the topic
- It often indicates the overall plan of the essay
- It should arouse the readers' interest in the topic

It has two major parts: General statements and thesis statement. In the general statements part, the writer grabs the readers' attention first with a hook sentence. Next, a few sentences as background information follow the hook. The second part; the thesis statement is the most important sentence in the essay as it states the main topic and often lists the major subtopics that will be discussed in the essay. It also indicates the essay' method of development.

1. The hook

"The hook is one or more sentences that get the reader's attention. A hook can be a famous quote, a broad statement, a question, a statistic, an anecdote or short story, or an interesting piece of information" (Folse, Muchmore-Vokoun, and Vestri Solomonvestri Solomon 2014: 5). The hook is the opening sentence which aims to engage the readers in the subject of the essay. The choice of the hook depends on the style of the writer and purpose of writing.

a. A famous quote

In Shakespeare's words, "to be or not to be, that's the question". Peoples' ultimate goal in life is to prove their existence and to show their achievements [.....].

b. A broad statement (funnel introduction)

Maintaining strong family bounds is undoubtedly necessary for the psychological and social stability of the child's life.

c. A question

In certain moments of solitude, one keeps on wondering how we can get over and have a new start. Do we need to be superheroes to handle the ups and downs of life?

d. A statistic

The 2017' UNESCO annual report on child abuse estimates 40150 children who were victims of homicide. In certain low-income countries, the number is getting higher [....].

e. Anecdote/short story

I still remember the day of my grandmother's funeral; all the details are stuck in my memory. It was a normal Spring Saturday morning when I was [.....].

f. Interesting piece of information

Each year for the past few decades during the Southern Hemisphere spring, chemical reactions cause ozone in the southern polar region to be destroyed rapidly and severely. This depleted region is known as the “ozone layer”.

➤ **ACTIVITY**

Read these introductions and find out the type of the hook. (All excerpts are taken from (Folse, Muchmore-Vokoun, and Vestri Solomonvestri Solomon 2014)

1.

Lung cancer kills more people in one year than all criminal and accidental deaths combined. This statistic is shocking, but the good news is that people are now well-informed about the risks connected to lung cancer. They know that their risk of contracting this terrible disease decreases if they either stop smoking or do not smoke at all. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about other types of cancer. Many people are not aware that their everyday behavior can lead to the development of different forms of cancer. By eating better, exercising regularly, and staying out of the sun, people can reduce their risks of cancer.

2.

Imagine life in Tokyo. Now imagine life in a rural Japanese town. Finally, picture life in Cairo, Egypt. Which of these last two places is more different from Tokyo? Many people might mistakenly choose Cairo because it is not found in Japan. However, city **dwellers** all over the world tend to have similar lifestyles, so the biggest differences are found between Tokyo and its smaller neighbor. Urban people and rural people, **regardless of** their country, live quite differently. Perhaps some of the most **notable** differences in the lives of these two groups include the **degree** of friendliness between residents, the **pace** of life, and the variety of available activities.

3.

The house was quiet. Of course it was, for everyone was napping on that **steam**y summer day. Normally I would hear my little brothers screaming and playing and my older sisters chatting on their cell phones, but on that day, everything was still. I recall that the temperature that day was 52 degrees Celsius outside, which was hot even for us who live in the desert. The only sound I heard was the air conditioning **struggling** to keep the rooms cool. I was bored and tried to think of something to do. Then the doorbell rang, and my life changed forever.

- 4.
- 5.

Coaches work outdoors while business managers stay in offices. Coaches train athletes' bodies, but managers are more focused on detail-oriented matters. These differences, however, **pale in comparison** to the similarities shared by the two professions, for the main functions of athletic team coaches and business managers are very closely related.

Almost everyone knows how the story of Cinderella ends, but do people actually think about how she spent her days before she met the prince? Her daily routine was not glamorous. She did everything from sweeping the floors to cooking the meals. If someone had asked Cinderella which chores she did not particularly like, she probably would have answered, "Why, none, of course. Housework is my duty!" In today's increasingly busy society, however, most people admit that they have definite dislikes for certain household chores. The top three of these unpopular tasks often include ironing clothes, washing dishes, and cleaning the bathroom.

1.1. Connecting information

To help the reader connect to the topic of the essay, the writer follows the hook with two to five sentences as background information to further explain, comment or illustrate for the hook sentence. The aim is to lead the reader to the thesis statement. Here is an example (Robitaille and Connely 2007: 95).

Our Daily Tutor

Around six o'clock in the morning, a loud thump can be heard at many front doors. For millions of Americans, it is one of the most cherished sounds of the day, for it heralds the arrival of the daily newspaper. Some of us enjoy the ritual of reading the paper as we sip our coffee while others take the paper to work and read it along the way. A few even have the patience to wait until they come home from work at the end of the day. Of course, not every American reads the paper every day, but most of us do spend the twenty-five cents to one dollar when some important event occurs. In fact, newspaper readership has been falling steadily for many years. Many people avoid the news because they find it depressing. However, what all Americans should realize is that citizens of a democracy need to be informed in order to make intelligent choices at the ballot box and to participate in the public debates that help shape our country's course. **The daily newspaper provides a valuable source of information.** Not only does it report the news, but it provides valuable background information that helps us understand how our world works, and it connects us to our community and culture.

1.2. Thesis statement

The thesis statement is generally the last part of the essay which carries the most important sentence (s) as it presents the main idea and often the sub ideas of the essay as well as the method of development. A thesis statement should not be neither too broad nor too narrow. Thus, it has to fit the length of the essay and adequately presents the main focus of the essay (Oshima and Hogue 1998; Robitaille and Connely 2007).

Compare these two theses statements:

1. Education is important to children for many reasons. **(too broad)**
2. Early schooling gives young learners many advantages. **(well-focused)**

1. People are unhealthy for many reasons. **(too broad)**
2. The diet of many American teenagers is unhealthy. **(adequate focus)**

There are two types of thesis statement: direct and indirect/ stated and implied.

The direct thesis gives the outline (subdivisions) of the essay. It is also called blueprinted thesis. Following Robitaille and Connely (2007: 100),

A blueprinted thesis lists in a series the major points the essay will develop. The points should be listed in the order that they will appear in the body paragraphs. The list may appear in the thesis or in a separate sentence after the thesis. The major points in the series

must be **parallel**. In other words, areas listed in the thesis should be expressed in the same grammatical form.

Consider these thesis statements:

1. The countryside is the ideal place to take kids for spring vacation because of its weather, landscape and peoples' culture.
2. Entrepreneurship becomes very important to the national economy as it creates new businesses, improves the national income and creates social change.
3. Apple is far away better than Samsung in terms of high security, constant software updates and smooth operation.

The indirect thesis (implied) does not contain specific information (subdivisions) of the main idea; however, the topic is clearly expressed. See these statements.

1. Unemployment is increasingly threatening the economic status of the country which requires immediate solutions.
2. The online learning is proved to be the perfect substitution for classroom instruction as a requirement for social distancing.
3. Though they are geographically distant, Japan and The USA share more than they differ.

ACTIVITY

Make these implied thesis statements blueprinted by adding parallel subtopics to the main idea.

1. Smartphones have radically changed our lives.
2. My parents are the source of my inspiration.
3. The advantage of vegetarian diet makes it the perfect choice of many celebrities.