

Guide to the Basic Introduction Paragraph

I. Purpose of the Introduction Paragraph: Provides context for reader and makes a point

- Know your audience (or hypothetical audience). Provide background so that the reader understands your points, but don't excessively summarize. Ask yourself why you include all the details that you do.
- OK to be brief. Make point. Move on. Git R Done!

II. Make a point: The Thesis

- Even if an essay is not 'argumentative,' it should still have a point, hence requiring a thesis. A personal response paper may discuss many different aspects of an article/book/movie, but will still have a main focus, whether it is an overall impression, comparison, or opinion.
- Don't make the thesis too general. e.g.: "Society should make better decisions." In choosing a thesis, it's hard to be too specific, as long as you have sufficient points to make and evidence to analyze.
- The thesis that you choose before writing the essay is not necessarily final (unless you are writing a timed exam). If, while writing the essay, you end up making a broader argument than you had planned, broaden the thesis to fit the essay, rather than vice-versa.
- Your thesis can be extremely concise ("California should outlaw all consumption of meat"), but will be stronger if you provide reasoning ("...to promote health and diminish livestock abuse.")

III. Don't begin arguing yet- Save that for your body paragraphs.

- What's the difference between making a point and arguing the point?
The example above makes a point. Arguing the point would be adding something like, "Eating red meat can, over time, clog one's arteries." This is good evidence, but is too specific for your intro.

IV. The *Hook*: A catchy quote or intriguing inquiry meant to capture your reader's attention. It can be relevant and effective, but frequently comes off as corny or annoying. If

your writing is coherent and makes a strong point, it will hook your reader. You're writing for an academic situation, not for Reader's Digest.

Example:

The following is an example of a poor introduction paragraph, with explanations after the errors in **bold**. The student wants to argue that a book's protagonist is bi-polar. His audience has already read the book and knows the basics about bi-polar disorder.

*Can you imagine what having two personalities at once would be like? I'll bet this book's protagonist can! **Unnecessary hook** Bi-polar disorder is a big deal these days blab blab blab... **Unnecessary detail** The protagonist has a traumatic experience. One day, when he's in the cornfield blab blab blab... **Unnecessary plot summary** His alcoholism adds to his problems **Fine.** Every time he goes on a binge he becomes over-confident and aggressive. Sometimes, however, he becomes melancholy and pensive. **Too much detail. Save it for later.** This protagonist definitely has problems. **Too vague and general.***

Here's an improved intro paragraph for the same essay:

Throughout My Struggle, by Jaime Pasqual, the protagonist displays contrasting personalities. His experience in the cornfield has had lasting effects on his mental health. Alcoholism exacerbates his psychological issues. The protagonist's alcohol abuse and suffering of trauma have caused him to become bi-polar, which explains many of his strange actions.