

(last updated 5/17/16)

An introduction is perhaps the most important section of your paper. An essay needs a strong beginning; this is the first thing your reader evaluates. Use your introduction to structure the body of your paper. For example, if you list three points in your introduction, discuss those points in that order throughout your paper. Remember, the introduction is the foundation for your paper. Condensing these points into a thesis statement and referring back to the thesis in each body point will strengthen the organization of your paper. Consistently referring back to your thesis may seem tedious, but your effort helps create a coherent paper. Below is a chart that lists three main purposes for an academic introductory paragraph. Use the pattern described to evaluate whether your introduction has any weaknesses.<sup>1</sup>

Purpose:	Example Sentences:
<b>FIRST:</b> Immediately notifies readers of the subject to be addressed.	Flaws in the current campaign finance system have allowed money and power to take control of federal elections.
<b>SECOND:</b> Narrows the subject	Inasmuch as the citizens and representatives recognize the need for reform, Congress should pass a law to change the current system of financing campaigns
<b>LAST:</b> Asserts the specific argument that the paper will pursue. In this example, this is the thesis statement of the paper. Please note that the thesis does not always have to come at the end of your introduction.	New reforms should include banning soft money, limiting all personal campaign expenditures, and increasing the amount of individual donations from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

If such an approach sounds too formal to you, consider the following introductory techniques to “lead up to” your thesis:

- Begin with a descriptive scene or anecdote that illustrates the problem or issue you intend to address.
- Start with a striking quote.
- Raise the central question your essay intends to answer.
- Try a startling fact.
- Outline the problem that needs to be solved in the most concise, convincing, and vivid way possible.
- In academic papers, briefly sum up the lines of arguments that appear in past research on the topic before you explain why you’re rejecting and/or accepting such arguments.

<sup>1</sup>The above introduction is taken from a *Scriblerian* essay contest winner’s paper entitled “The Need for Campaign Finance Reform” by John D. Bunkall.