



UNIVERSITY OF
**DETROIT
MERCY**

Introductions and Thesis Statements

<https://writingcenter.udmercy.edu/> (for resources)

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The Writing Center
DETROIT MERCY

What Is an Introduction Paragraph?

- ⇒ The introduction is the first paragraph of any essay.
- ⇒ The introduction should present the main idea for the essay and capture the reader's attention.
- ⇒ Like all paragraphs in a college-level project, an introduction paragraph should be about 5 to 9 sentences in length. (Avoid page-long paragraphs).

How Do I Construct an Introduction Paragraph?

- ⇒ There are numerous ways to begin an essay (see strategies below).
- ⇒ One basic way to start an essay is by using a funnel structure. In this structure, the writer begins with a sentence that both grabs the reader's attention and provides a general overview of the main issue that will be discussed in the essay.
- ⇒ Following the initial comments on the topic, provide some background on the topic.
- ⇒ Transition into the thesis statement, giving the reader more insight into the specific ideas that will be covered in the essay.
- ⇒ End your paragraph with the thesis statement. This should cover exactly what the essay will be about, and all body paragraphs and the conclusion should relate back to this statement.

What are Some Effective Introduction Strategies?

- ⇒ **Begin with a quotation:** Open your essay with a quotation that connects to your topic or central idea. Choose a quotation that naturally supports your argument and be sure to explain its relevance rather than letting it stand on its own.
- ⇒ **Funnel format:** In this style, the paragraph begins with a broad overview, and becomes increasingly specific (discussed above).
- ⇒ **Provide a definition of the main topic:** Define an important concept as it relates to your essay rather than relying on a dictionary definition. The definition should establish how you will use the term throughout your argument.
- ⇒ **Start with interesting statistics:** Capture the reader's attention with a surprising or noteworthy fact, statistic, or piece of information. The fact should connect directly to your thesis.
- ⇒ **Explain the long-term effect(s) of the topic:** Describe the consequences or impact of an event or idea before explaining what caused it. This creates suspense and encourages readers to discover the explanation.
- ⇒ **Pose rhetorical questions:** Start the essay with thought-provoking questions that your essay will answer. This encourages readers to think about the topic and continue reading for the answers.
- ⇒ **Share an anecdote:** Open with a brief story or real-life event related to your topic. An anecdote draws readers in by making the subject more engaging.

- ⇒ **Provide a historical overview:** Include essential context that helps readers understand your topic and argument. Keep the background concise and directly related to your thesis.

What Is an Effective Thesis Statement?

- ⇒ The thesis statement often resolves a central research question regarding the general topic.
- ⇒ The thesis statement should let the reader know what the essay will be about.
- ⇒ It should be specific.
- ⇒ It should tell the reader the writer's purpose for writing the essay.
- ⇒ It should be at the end of the introduction paragraph of the essay.

What are Some Types of Thesis Statements?

- ⇒ **Argumentative:** Makes a clear claim about a topic and supports that position with logical reasoning, evidence, and analysis.
- ⇒ **Analytical:** Examines a topic by breaking it into its key components, interpreting their significance, and evaluating how they contribute to the overall meaning or issue.
- ⇒ **Expository (Explanatory):** Explains a topic, concept, or process by presenting information, evidence, and clear explanations to inform the audience.

Sample Introduction Paragraph Using Historical Overview

Throughout recent history, humanitarian intervention has become an increasingly significant feature of international relations as countries and international organizations seek to respond to humanitarian crises beyond their own borders. At the same time, the use of force has long been a central instrument of foreign policy, raising enduring questions about state sovereignty, legitimacy, and international law. Although humanitarian intervention and military force may initially appear to represent competing principles, they are often deeply interconnected. Humanitarian intervention frequently depends upon the threat or application of military force to halt genocide, ethnic cleansing, or other widespread human rights violations. As a result, the central challenge is not whether force and humanitarian intervention are compatible, but under what circumstances the use of force can be considered legitimate and necessary. Within the contemporary international system, humanitarian intervention and the use of force are compatible concepts, provided that military action is undertaken only when clearly justified by humanitarian necessity, supported by international legitimacy, and consistent with established legal and ethical principles.

Sources: Harvard College Writing Center <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/what-do-introductions-across-disciplines-have-common>

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Resources for Writers: Introduction Strategies
<https://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/resources/writers/introduction-strategies/>

Utah Valley University Writing Center: www.uvu.edu/writingcenter/