

Writing an Introduction

In an academic essay, you need to make your position on the topic clear to your audience. In your introduction, you need to interest your readers and make them want to continue reading, and you also want to state the position that you are going to discuss or defend. By doing this, you prepare your audience for what you are planning to discuss.

Introductions often begin with general statements. If you begin your essay with general statements, you can often interest your audience. Below are three essay topics and some general introduction statement examples.

Topic #1: Write an essay about the disadvantages ***or*** advantages of being a student.

General Introduction Statements for Topic #1

- ❖ In the United States, most people are educated.
- ❖ Not everybody in the world can go to college and get an education.
- ❖ Everyone wants to attend college.
- ❖ Are you a student?

Topic #2: Write an essay about the disadvantages ***or*** advantages of practicing a certain sport.

General Introduction Statements for Topic #2

- ❖ I am sure that you are all interested in sports.
- ❖ Almost everyone enjoys playing sports.
- ❖ Around the world, participating in sports is a very popular hobby.

Topic #3: Write an essay about the qualities of a good partner—a girlfriend or boyfriend, wife or husband.

General Introduction Statements for Topic #3

- ❖ People have different characteristics.
- ❖ Most people are attracted to another person for a variety of reasons.
- ❖ Most people don't like to be lonely.
- ❖ It is very important to have a good partner.

Tips for writing a good introduction:

1. Begin with an interesting fact or statistic.

Example: *Eighty percent of college students think attending college now will have many advantages for them in the future.*

2. Begin with an extended definition of a term that is important for your audience to know. (Not a definition out of the dictionary though, put it in your own words.)

Example: *A bilingual person is someone who knows two languages and is able to communicate with others who speak the languages.*

3. Begin with a question.

Example: *Do you enjoy sports? or Are you a student?*

4. Begin with a brief story that relates to your topic.

Example: *Last year, I interviewed for a job at a local newspaper. When I told the interviewer that I was attending college to become a better writer and that I had taken some English classes, he was very pleased. He told me that attending college has many advantages for young people. I agree that being a student has many advantages for me now and will continue to be a benefit in the years to come.*

Practice Activity #1

Let's look at the following introduction written by an ESL student. This student had chosen to write on Topic #1: Write an essay about the disadvantages **or** advantages of being a student.

Student Model #1 (Introduction)

The United States is a very big and very educated country. Being a student in the U.S. has many advantages for Americans and immigrants.

Now let's analyze this introduction.

1. What is the first thing you notice about this introduction? Is it too long or too short?

2. Are there any general statements to introduce the topic?

3. Is there a thesis statement?

4. What are some sentences that the student could add to improve this introduction?

Writing an Introduction – Sentence Order

Below, there are 3 introductions for essays describing a fun indoor place. The sentences in these introductions are **NOT** in the correct order. What is the correct order for each paragraph? Write the letters of the sentences in the best order.

Introduction #1:

(A) This is a wonderful place to visit because here we spend a lot of time with friends by play the games, tell the funny stories, sing songs, etc. (B) I like this place. (C) I have fun in my uncle’s house. (D) Everyone has a special place where they have fun.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

Introduction #2:

(A) Many tourists come from all over the world to visit this place every year. (B) Shah Aba’s Palace is a fun indoor place for many visitors. (C) People have fun there because the style and design of the building is very beautiful, they find something about ancient time and they can have some other activities like riding a horse, going to shop and eating in the cafeteria. (D) The architecture of the building is a major tourist attraction.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

Introduction #3:

(A) Some people like to visit fitness clubs, another museums, restaurants, big stores, etc. (B) Many people in the world have very different fun indoor places. (C) It is a very big hall in my church. (D) My fun indoor place is unusual. (E) I have a few reasons why this place is very interesting for me.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

Writing a Thesis Statement

After a general statement in your introduction, you should narrow your focus to a specific topic. This focused idea is called your **thesis statement**. A thesis statement is sometimes called your main idea sentence. A thesis statement will state the purpose of your essay. Your thesis statement will guide the reader into the first supporting paragraph and prepare them for what you plan to explain, argue, or say. ***A thesis statement is usually the last sentence in your introduction.*** Often a thesis statement will include a “because” clause. For example, a good thesis statement for Topic #2 (Write an essay about the disadvantages or advantages of practicing a certain sport.) is: “I think practicing soccer is beneficial **because** it helps a person to stay in shape, to learn to work with a team, and to see the importance of practicing a skill.” In this example, the student states that s/he thinks practicing a specific sport (soccer) is beneficial and lists three reasons why. These three reasons will be further developed and explained in three separate supporting paragraphs. These three reasons will be the topic sentences for each supporting paragraph.

Your thesis should:

1. Introduce the topic of your essay.

Example: *The qualities of a good partner are...*

2. Be a complete sentence. NO FRAGMENTS! ~~*Maria a great partner.*~~

3. Express an opinion, belief, or idea.

Example: *I believe that the most important qualities to have in a partner are honesty, patience, and good looks.*

4. Need to be proved or explained; someone should be able to disagree with it.

Example: ~~Soccer is a game where players kick the ball or use their heads but never their hands.~~ ** This is **NOT** a good thesis statement because it is a FACT.)

Example: *I think practicing soccer is beneficial **because** it helps a person to stay in shape, to learn to work with a team, and to see the importance of practicing a skill.* (You can explain this statement AND someone could disagree with it.)

5. Not be a question. (The answer to the question, "What is the main idea you want to communicate to your audience in your essay?" is your thesis statement.)

Example: ~~Do you think practicing sports is beneficial?~~ ** This is **NOT** a good thesis, but this is a good general statement that can be used in your introduction.**

6. Not be a statement of fact that gives no possibilities for development.

Example: ~~Exercise makes a person healthy.~~ **This is **NOT** a good example of a thesis statement because it is a fact that everyone accepts as true.**



OUTLINE FOR AN ESSAY ABOUT TOPIC #2

I. INTRODUCTION: *Almost everyone enjoys playing sports.* (Here you need to add more sentences to connect the introductory sentence and the thesis statement.)

I think practicing soccer is beneficial because it helps a person to stay in shape, to learn to work with a team, and to see the importance of practicing a skill. (Important: Notice that this thesis statement is the last sentence in the introduction.)

II. BODY PARAGRAPH #1: **(Topic sentence)** *Playing soccer helps a person stay in shape.*

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

III. BODY PARAGRAPH #2: **(Topic sentence)** *Playing soccer teaches players to work with a team.*

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

IV. BODY PARAGRAPH #3: **(Topic sentence)** *Playing soccer teaches players to practice a skill, and this is an important life lesson.*

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

V. CONCLUSION: (Restate the thesis statement in a different way or restate the main ideas from each body paragraph. These are your final thoughts about soccer.) _____

As you can see, playing soccer has many benefits that a player can use on the field and in their daily lives. I hope I'll see you out on the soccer field soon!

Very Important: Notice that this is an outline for a five-paragraph essay. Your essays in this class should be at least five paragraphs long!

Practice Activity

Now, let's look at the following student's paragraph and analyze the thesis statement by answering the questions below. This student chose to write on **Topic #1: Write about the advantages or disadvantages of being a student.**

The Advantages of Being a Student

Not everybody in the world can go to college and get an education. Many young people want to study, but many of them don't have this opportunity. Many young people just can't get an education because they live in poor countries. People who can study are lucky because there are many advantages to being a student.

1. Does the writer have a thesis statement? If yes, please copy it here. _____

2. Where is the thesis statement?

3. How many sentences come before the thesis statement?

Thesis Statements vs. Supporting Sentences

Read the following sentences. In each box, one sentence is a thesis statement that can go at the end of an introduction, and the other/others are sentences that should go in the body paragraphs. Write **TH** next to the thesis statements, and write an **X** next to the detail sentences.

- _____ 1. Water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen.
- _____ 2. The water in our homes may contain harmful chemicals.

- _____ 3. Throughout history, the good or bad luck of numbers has been a matter of superstitious belief.
- _____ 4. In Hong Kong, the number eight is lucky.
- _____ 5. The number 13 is thought to be an unlucky number by some people.

- _____ 6. Some parents don't want their children to watch violent TV programs.
- _____ 7. Television has a bad influence on children for three main reasons.
- _____ 8. Children shouldn't see the nudity and sex that is included in some TV programs.
- _____ 9. Television programs sometimes show people using drugs or drinking alcohol.

- _____ 10. In certain parts of Asia, people believed that they became cats when they died.
- _____ 11. There is a superstition among sailors that says wearing earrings will save a sailor from drowning.
- _____ 12. It is said that to knock over the salt on a table is to meet trouble.
- _____ 13. When someone leaves on a trip, people throw water out of the window to wish the traveler a good trip.
- _____ 14. There are many superstitions that are similar in several countries around the world.