



# Introductions and Conclusions

**Introductions:** The introductory paragraph of an essay serves the purpose of drawing a reader into the substance of the argument to follow. To accomplish this purpose, the introduction may need to include the following components:

1. *Attention-grabber:* The first thing that the reader will see. It can be a quote, anecdote, description, rhetorical question, etc. Whatever the form, it needs to make the reader want to read more of the essay.
2. *Background info:* A quick summary of the context, relevance, or significance of your paper topic for an uninformed reader.
3. *Thesis statement:* A one or two sentence summary of the main argument made in the paper. Your thesis should state one specific, debateable idea that is narrow enough in scope to be provable.
4. *Signals:* The introduction should set up the organization and tone of the rest of the paper. This can be accomplished by previewing aspects of the topic that will be discussed in the body of the paper.

**Conclusions:** The concluding paragraph should tie up loose ends and leave the reader with a sense of completion. If the paper is long, it reminds them of all the points they've just heard, and leaves them with a final thought to walk away with. Consider the following strategies for writing conclusions:

1. *Remind:* Restate the paper's main points in a different way. This is especially critical for longer, more complex papers, when the reader may not remember as far back as the first point made. The reader should be able to read just the conclusion and still understand the basic topic of the paper, the argument made, and the line of reasoning. The conclusion should remind the reader of the fundamental question and clearly summarize the answer. Make sure to use different wording or this will seem redundant and forced.
2. *Contextualize:* The concluding paragraph is a useful place to tell the reader why they should care about the topic of your paper. Try to answer the question, "So what?" Give the larger, global context of your argument.
3. *Consistency:* Try to tie the conclusion back the introduction. For example, if you opened with a story or analogy, come back to it at the end to give the paper a sense of overall unity.
4. *End Big:* The conclusion is the last thing your audience will read, and is therefore the part they will remember the best. You have the chance to pick a main idea that you hope your reader will walk away with and drive it home. To do this, try ending with a strong motivating statement, a call to action, or a plea, whichever is most appropriate for your topic. Assume that by the time the reader reaches your concluding paragraph, you've got him on your side; now let him know what you want.