

Introduction Paragraphs

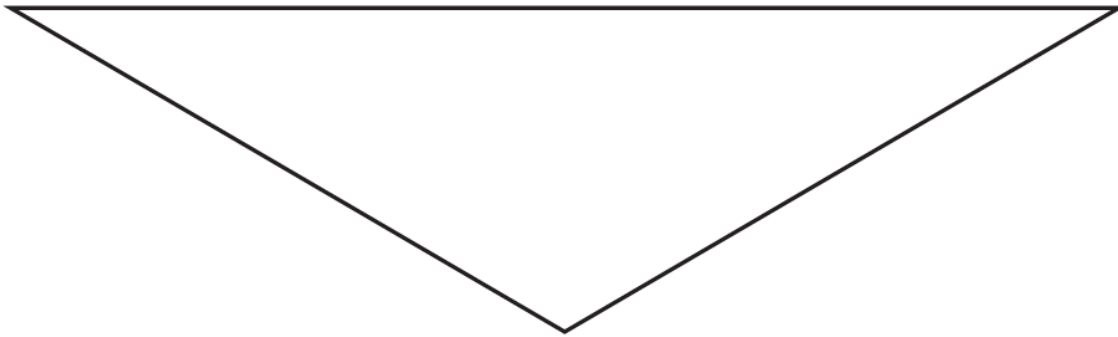
The introduction paragraph is the first paragraph of an essay. This paragraph helps your reader be ready to understand your main idea.

Your introduction paragraph should—

- grab your reader's attention
- introduce the topic of your essay
- present your thesis

You can visualize the ideas in your introduction paragraph by thinking about an inverted triangle. The ideas in the beginning of your introduction paragraph are general. Then you narrow down the topic to a specific idea.

General Topic: Exercise



Specific Idea: Exercise is essential because it improves our overall physical and mental health.

Grab the reader’s attention and introduce the topic

The very first sentence of your introduction should get your reader interested in your topic. The first sentence of an introduction is called a “hook.” There are many types of hooks: facts, questions, problems, descriptions, etc. There is not one “perfect” hook for each essay. Your hook can help you introduce the general topic of your essay.

Type of Hook	Example
Fact	Everyone needs to exercise
Question	Do you like to exercise?
Problem	It can be difficult to find time for exercise
Description	Exercise is a sweaty, tiring way to spend your time.

As you introduce your topic, make sure to give the reader enough background information about the topic that the reader will be able to understand the thesis.

1 Exercise: Identify hooks and general topics.

Identify the type of hook used in each introduction paragraph as well as the general topic.

1. Working students deal with a lot of stress in their lives every day. Stress is very common for students while they are working because they have a lot of responsibilities to balance. They have a list of tasks for school and work that can overwhelm their schedules. Feeling stress is normal when there is not enough time to finish all of your responsibilities, but it can have negative results. Instead of avoiding stress, students simply need to learn how to manage it. In order for students to manage stress better, they need to prioritize their tasks, eat well, and get enough sleep.

Type of hook: _____ General topic of the paragraph: _____

2. Many business owners find that running a business is a lot harder than they thought it was. How business owners decide to manage their business will determine their future success. They have to make important decisions about how to manage their business every day. These decisions include hiring employees, the hours of operation, the products and services that will be provided, and the way the business will be advertised. These decisions impact a lot of people. Successful business owners need to make wise decisions that satisfy employees, customers, and investors.

Type of hook: _____ General topic of the paragraph: _____

Present your thesis

The thesis states the main idea, or focus, of the essay. The rest of the essay will give evidence and explanations that show why or how your thesis is true. Your reader will expect to find the main idea in the introduction paragraph, rather than later in the essay.

An effective thesis—

- addresses the **prompt** if there is one* (i.e., answers the question).
- is usually at the **end** of the introduction paragraph.
- controls the **content** of all of the body paragraphs.
- is a **complete** sentence.
- does **not announce** the topic (e.g., “I’m going to talk about exercise.”).
- should **not** simply be a **fact** (e.g., “Many people exercise.”).
- should **not** be **too general** (e.g., “Exercise is good.”).
- should **not** be **too specific** (e.g., “Exercise decreases the chance of developing diabetes, heart disease, asthma, osteoporosis, depression, and anxiety.”).
- may **state** main points (e.g., “Exercise is essential because it improves overall physical and mental health.”).
- may **imply** main points (e.g., “Exercise is essential for improving our well-being.”)

*In some essays you write, you will not have a specific question to answer. Instead, you may need to choose your own topic. Your essay should still answer a question (e.g., how are typical Japanese and Chinese birthday celebrations similar or different?).

2 Exercise: Analyze a thesis.

Read the introduction paragraph below to complete this exercise.

Prompt: Why is exercise important?

Thesis: Exercise is essential because it improves overall physical and mental health.

Use this list of criteria to evaluate the thesis.

1. Does the thesis address the prompt?
2. Is the thesis a complete sentence?
3. Does the thesis announce the topic?
4. Is the thesis simply a fact?
5. Is the thesis too general? Too specific?
6. Are the main points stated or implied?

3 Exercise: Identify effective thesis statements.

For each prompt, identify which thesis statement is more effective. Write an X on the line next to the more effective thesis statement.

1. Prompt: Describe your city.
 1. ___ Thesis #1 Let's see all of the interesting things you can do in Rome.
 2. ___ Thesis #2 Rome has a very unique cultural history.
2. Prompt: What are the qualities of an influential leader?
 1. ___ Thesis #1 An influential leader is open-minded and humble.
 2. ___ Thesis #2 Some people are born to be leaders and influence the world.
3. Prompt: How can young adults overcome feelings of homesickness?
 1. ___ Thesis #1 There are some ways to solve feeling homesick.
 2. ___ Thesis #2 Enjoying comforts from home can help combat homesickness.
4. Prompt: How is writing different from speaking in a foreign language?
 1. ___ Thesis #1 Writing provides more time to plan and revise than speaking.
 2. ___ Thesis #2 Many people around the world communicate through writing.

4 Exercise: Evaluate thesis statements.

Which sentences are effective thesis statements? Which sentences are not effective thesis statements? On a piece of paper, write "yes" if you think the thesis is effective or "no" if you think it is ineffective. Discuss why each thesis is (or is not) effective.

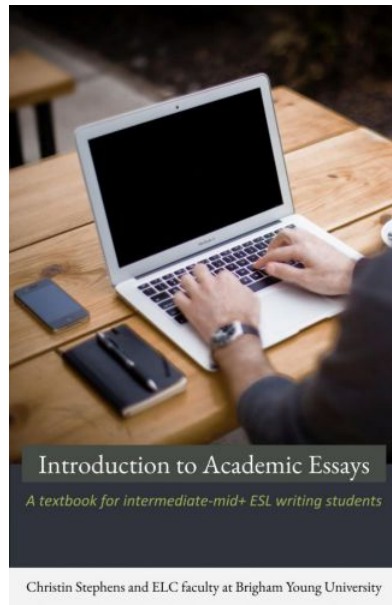
Prompt: Where is the best place for students to study?

1. Now I will show you the best place to study.
 2. The benefits of studying in the library.
 3. The library is the best place to study due to its many resources and quiet environment.
 4. The BYU library is the best place to study because it is open very late most nights, usually until midnight, and students have busy schedules due to work, family, school, friends, and church activities.
 5. Why study in the library?
 6. Libraries are quiet
 7. In this essay, we will see how libraries are useful for many students.
 8. There are many features of typical libraries that make a library the best place for students to study.
 9. Is because library spaces are quiet and comfortable.
 10. Studying is important.
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5 Exercise: Write a thesis.

On a piece of paper, write a thesis for each prompt. Make sure the thesis addresses the prompt clearly.

- 1. What are weddings like in your country?*
- 2. What problems do smartphones cause in our lives?*
- 3. What are qualities of a true friend?*
- 4. Should video games be prohibited?*



Stephens, C. (n.d.). *Academic A Writing*. BYU Open Textbook Network.
https://open.byu.edu/academic_a_writing