**Writing an Introduction**

**The purpose of an introduction is to:**

* familiarize readers with the topic
* summarize what will follow in the paper
* interest readers and motivate them to read further

The introduction sets the stage for the **main point or thesis statement**, usually a single sentence that clarifies the topic and the writer’s point of view. The thesis statement is most often found in the introductory paragraph.

Examples of what can be included in an introduction:

* a quotation—can be from a source cited in the paper or another source
* a question—can encourage the reader to consider the topic in a specific way
* an acknowledgment of the opposing viewpoint
* a relevant anecdote/story
* an interesting fact or statistic
* a definition or explanation of a term
* an analogy (comparing two things for the purpose of explanation).

**Length**

It is generally recommended that college-level paragraphs contain at least 3-5 sentences, though there are no definite rules. The length of the introduction will often depend on the complexity of the topic and length of the paper. Often, the longer and/or more complex the paper or topic, the longer the introduction.

**The process for writing an introduction can vary. An introduction may be**:

* Written first and modified later in the writing process, as needed
* Written while the body of the paper is under construction
* Written last, after the paper has taken shape.

The process of writing often enables the writer to develop ideas and gain clarity about a subject, and the introduction, which summarizes what will follow in the paper, is often most effectively written after that development.

When writing the introduction first, it is essential to ensure that it properly introduces not what the writer had initially planned to write but what was actually written.

Work Cited

Harris, Muriel. *Prentice Hall Reference Guide.* 7th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.

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