

## How to Write an Essay Introduction

A good introduction paragraph is an essential part of any academic essay. It sets up your argument and tells the reader what to expect.

The main goals of an introduction are to:

- Catch your reader's attention.
- Give background on your topic.
- Present your thesis statement.

### Step 1: Hook your reader and catch their attention

The hook should lead the reader into your essay, giving a sense of the topic you're writing about and why it's interesting. Your first sentence sets the tone for the whole essay, so spend some time on writing an effective hook.

- ✓ Avoid using a dictionary definition as your hook, especially if it's an obvious term that everyone knows.
- ✓ Avoid long, dense sentences. Start with something clear, concise and catchy that will spark your reader's curiosity.
- ✓ Avoid overly broad claims or plain statements of fact.

### Examples: Writing a good hook

Look at the following examples of weak hooks and learn how to improve them.

**Example 1.** Braille was an extremely important invention.

This statement is too vague, and the reader is left wondering why Braille was an important invention.

**A better way to say this:** The invention of Braille was a major turning point in the history of disability education.

This statement is more precise. It makes a claim about why the topic is important.

**Example 2.** The internet is defined as “a global computer network providing a variety of information and communication facilities.”

Part of this statement contains a dictionary definition. Most people also know the term “internet”.

**A better way to say this:** The spread of the internet has had a world-changing effect, not least on the world of education.

This statement is precise and tells the reader what the topic is about in this essay.

## **Step 2: Give background information**

Next, give your readers the context they need to understand your topic and argument. Depending on your essay, this might include

- historical, geographical, or social context.
  - an outline of the debate you’re addressing.
  - a summary of relevant theories or research about the topic.
  - definitions of key terms.
- ✓ The information here should be broad but clearly focused and relevant to your argument. You can mention points that you will return to later.
  - ✓ How much space you need for the background depends on your topic and the scope of your essay.
  - ✓ In the example of introduction paragraph listed later in the handout, you will notice a few sentences that introduce the topic and sketch the social context that the essay will address.

## **Step 3: Present your thesis statement**

The thesis statement or your claim is a sentence or two that will normally be at the end of your introduction paragraph that sums up your overall argument.

- ✓ The goal is to clearly convey your own position in a debate or your central point about a topic.
- ✓ A good thesis isn’t just a statement of fact, but a claim that requires evidence and explanation which is supported by your body paragraphs.

## Example of an Introduction Paragraph

**(Lead in hook to catch your reader's attention)** The invention of Braille was a major turning point in the history of disability education.

**(Background information for your reader. Interesting facts and social context are provided which your reader will find interesting and helpful)** The writing system of raised dots used by people who are blind or visually impaired was developed by Louis Braille in nineteenth-century France. In a society that did not value people who had disabilities in general, blindness was particularly stigmatized, and lack of access to reading and writing was a significant barrier to social participation. The idea of tactile reading was not entirely new, but existing methods based on sighted systems were difficult to learn and use. As the first writing system designed for people who could not see print, Braille was a groundbreaking new accessibility tool. It not only provided practical benefits, but also helped change the cultural status of blindness.

**(Thesis statement, main point of the essay that is supported by body paragraphs)** Since the invention of Braille, people who are blind or visually impaired have been able to widen their social and cultural lives by participating in mainstream culture.