

# Writing Introductions & Conclusions

## Introductions & Conclusions

Many writers think introductions and conclusions are the most difficult parts of an essay to write. Yes, they can be difficult to write, but help is available—there are some fairly simple things you can do to be assured of writing a good, solid introduction and conclusion. Follow these guidelines and practice your craft! We will start with writing introductions.

**Writing Introductions:** Always try to remember that you are working within **the conventions of Western writing**—in this case, the Western **structure of a definite beginning, middle, and end** in a piece of writing, each with its own set of guidelines. When **beginning** a piece of writing, remember to **include some background information**—do not assume your reader knows much (or anything) about the topic—your job is to “fill in the gaps,” to provide enough information to **create a basic foundation upon which you will “build” your main ideas**.

The **introduction is also used to capture readers’ attention**, to “hook” them into the writing. Some **interesting, attention-getting, or surprising item** that relates to the subject will do the job. Many methods will work to introduce a subject, including **posing a question, telling a story, giving a quotation**—all of these, of course, need to be related in some way to the main idea. The target idea here is **getting the reader’s interest**.

The introduction of most academic writing also needs to contain some sort of **thesis statement**, which **calls attention to your central idea** and **signals the reader what the piece of writing is about**. See this website’s pages on [thesis statements](#) for a more detailed treatment of this **important and valuable resource for ESL writers**.

So, to sum up...

*The introductory paragraph(s)...*

- **Attracts the reader’s attention.**
- **Supplies background information.**
- **Presents the writer’s thesis (main idea).**

*Some common methods used in writing introductions*

- 1.) Begin with a broad, general statement and narrow it to **a specific point (main idea or thesis)**.
- 2.) Contrast—Begin with an idea that is the opposite of the one you plan to talk about—then contrast and compare this concept with your main idea.
- 3.) Explain the importance of the topic—this is an excellent way into people’s minds, if they feel they have an “investment” in an idea, or if it somehow affects them.
- 4.) Begin with an incident or a brief story—and then relate it to the topic.
- 5.) Ask a question—the resulting essay becomes the answer to the question.
- 6.) Use a quotation that reflects your topic or relates to the topic.

**Writing Conclusions:** Writing the ending of a piece is as difficult as it gets for many writers—or at least it is as tough as writing a beginning can be. When there really is nothing more to say, it must be time to stop writing—yet a piece of writing **cannot just stop**. Good writing needs to include some sort of a “proper” ending, **not just an abrupt stoppage** of everything, but rather, **a transition to an ending**. So what can be done? Plenty. Remember the expectations of western academic culture—in this case, **a transitional ending is needed**, a “wrap-up” of what you have already written about. Think of putting wrapping paper on a package as the final step before offering a gift to someone.

First, you will want to “**re-cap**” your piece, that is, **summarize** your previously expressed ideas into a few sentences, no more. **At the very minimum, this short summary offers a foundation for a concluding paragraph**. In some cases, **it may be all you need for a basic ending**. But a more thorough conclusion does more than just summarize. When done well, a good conclusion also can make readers **think about the topic in new ways**, or perhaps **pose a question for future focus**. It may **reiterate or reinforce ideas** related to the topic’s importance—but remember—**do not insert new information** into a conclusion. Any important points should have already been thoroughly covered by your essay or report.

*The concluding paragraph(s)...*

- **Summarizes** the writer’s **thesis**.
- “Wraps-up” the main ideas found in the piece.
- Offers **thoughts for future reflection and action** on the topic.

*Some common methods used in writing conclusions*

- 1.) End with a **summary of your essay**. **At the minimum, at least do this!**
- 2.) Pose an idea to make readers think more deeply about the topic.
- 3.) Pose an idea for future action on that particular topic.
- 4.) Explain or reiterate the idea’s relevance.
- 5.) Come “full circle” back to an idea presented in the introduction.