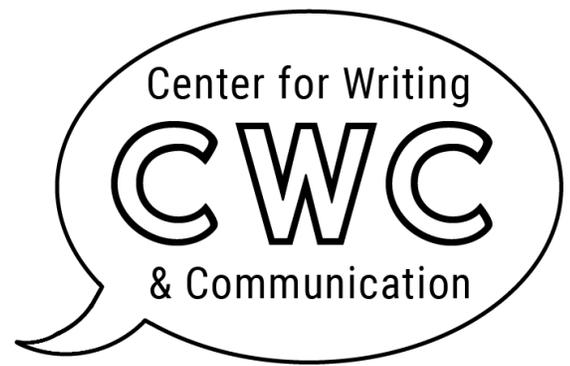


Introductions



Sometimes, starting a paper can be the hardest part. Introductions (along with conclusions) are the most critical parts of an academic paper, or any piece of writing in general. The introduction is what brings the readers into the body of the writing. In order to do that, writers must create an effective introduction that takes the reader's thinking to a broader conversation surrounding the topic of the paper, and then narrows the introduction down into one single, arguable, and clear point, also known as the thesis. However, before you write an effective introduction, there are some things that you need to know about introductions in general.

What is an Introduction?

- An introduction tells the audience what you are talking about in the paper.
- It also tells the audience why the topic you chose is important. Why does this topic relate to their lives? In other words, you are telling the audience, "Here is why you should care."
- The introduction may be many paragraphs, or simply one paragraph at the beginning of the paper.

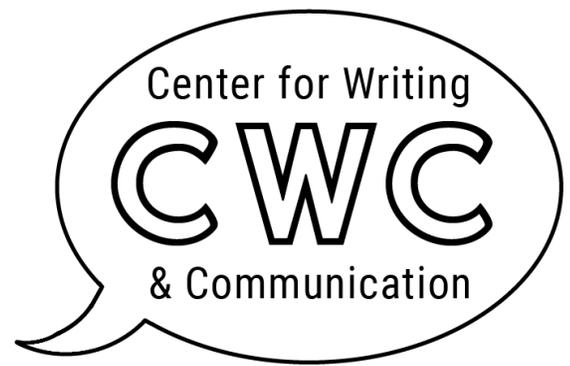
What is the Purpose of an Introduction?

- It introduces the topic, and the larger conversation surrounding the topic.
- It establishes the relevance of the topic to the audience and engages the reader in what you are writing about.
- Introduces at least one source for the paper (if sources are used in the paper).
- States the main argument, thesis, hypothesis, research question, or other focused statement.

Introducing the Larger Conversation:

- What ideas surround your thesis?
 - ◊ If, for example, you were writing a paper on gun use in the classroom, the introduction would be a good place to include background information about gun control itself, or maybe even using guns for self-defense. By introducing these other things in conversation with your thesis, readers can more easily understand what you are talking about and could even relate to it through one of the other background topics that you mentioned in the introduction.

Introductions



- There are four types of context, or background information that you can use to set up this conversation in the introduction:
 - ◊ **Historical context** involves a biographical sketch of a person’s life or a major event in history.
 - ◊ **Personal context** involves a personal experience or story that a writer uses to engage other readers into their topic.
 - ◊ **Progressive context** involves fact and figures that relate your topic and applying them to more relevant information today.
 - ◊ **Circumstantial context** involves a history of a controversy or stigma so that readers can get a better understanding of why this controversy exists and how your topic came to be.

Establishing Relevance to Your Audience:

- Why does your topic matter to the audience?
- What does this topic mean to your audience?
- What are the implications of this problem?
 - ◊ For example, keeping on the “guns in the classroom” topic, writers could say that if guns are used in the classroom, students, teachers, and staff would be safer. If guns were not used in the classroom, students, teachers, and staff would not be safer and people’s lives would be in jeopardy.

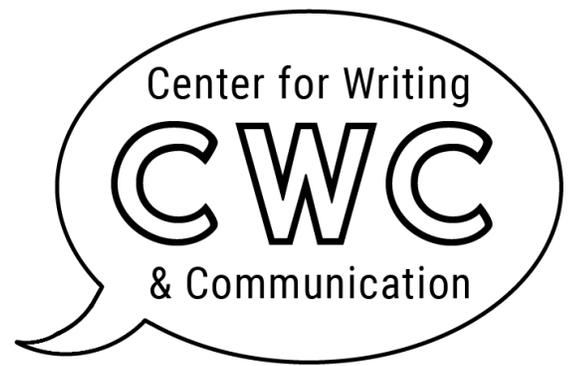
Introducing Sources:

- Introduce at least one source that you will talk about in your paper.
- Include the full name of the author and the full name of the article in the paper. This will show the credibility of your paper. By adding sources at the beginning of the paper, you can allow the audience to see other people that are also in conversation with your topic.

Stating Your Main Argument:

- Narrow down the general conversation to a specific, arguable thesis.
- Make sure your thesis is specific, arguable, and relevant to the topic.
- Tell the audience what you are going to talk about in the rest of the paper.

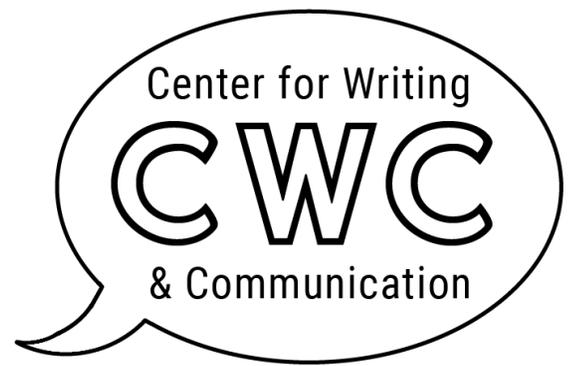
Introductions



According to the Case Western Reserve University, these are the five common mistakes that writers make when writing an introduction:

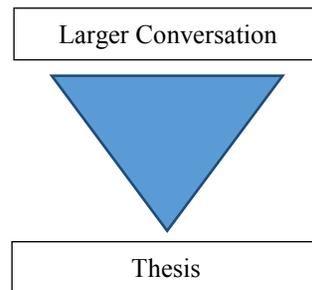
- ***The overly general introduction*** involves an introduction that never narrows down a conversation to the main point, but rather makes general statements that the audience already knows. (e.g. Gun control is a major problem in the world today...)
- ***The dictionary introduction*** involves using a dictionary definition to define a word or phrase. This is a cliché way to open up an introduction, and some of the definitions may not be the best definitions for that specific word. This may deviate the readers' focus away from your main topic.
- ***The off-topic introduction*** uses a lot of background information and goes on and on about things that are not relevant to the main topic itself. Try to stick with ideas that relate to your topic when you are bringing up background information about your topic. Straying too far away from your thesis could leave your audience confused and frustrated before they even begin your paper.
- ***The introduction that goes too far*** involves an introduction that includes a lot of details about what you are going to talk about in your paper. Leave the details for the body of the paper. The introduction should merely touch on some of the main ideas that you will discuss in your paper. Think of an introduction like a movie trailer, you do not want to give away the whole movie in the trailer. Leave some thrilling parts for the audience.
- ***The speech introduction*** is one in which the writer says things like “In this paper, I will talk about...” This type of introduction makes the paper less formal and more like a speech. You are not giving a speech, but rather, you are writing a paper.

Introductions



An easy way to think of an introduction is like a funnel (see picture below):

- In other words, the top part of the funnel, the wider part, is where the writer will introduce the background information.
- The bottom of the funnel, or the skinnier, pointier part, is where the writer will narrow down the background information into the thesis or main argument.



Writing an introduction is hard, but with these tips in mind, hopefully you can be on your way to writing an effective introduction that will keep your audience wanting to read more about your topic.

Some of the information above was found by the following sources:

- “Guide to Writing Introductions and Conclusions.” *Tutorial & Instructional Programs*. Gallaudet University. 2014. Web. 31 March 2015.
- Lisle, Victoria. “Assignment 2: Peer Review Worksheet.” Given at the University of Central Arkansas Writing 1320 Class. 10 March 2015. Handout.
- Rosenwasser, David, and Stephen, Jill. *Writing Analytically*. Boston: Wadsworth Cenage Learning, 2012. Print.