

Introductory Paragraphs

The **introductory paragraph** of an essay effectively engages the reader, introduces the topic, and presents a clear thesis statement.

Hook + Background + Thesis

A **hook** grabs the reader's attention. Common hooks include: a startling statistic or unusual fact, a vivid example, a description, a paradoxical statement, a quotation or bit of dialogue, a question, an analogy, a joke or anecdote.

Background information prepares readers for the argument or explanation that will be presented in the essay. Keep in mind that readers may not know as much about the topic as the writer does. Background information commonly includes: key definitions, context, historical timeframe, relevant personae, and/or an objective, balanced summary of both sides of a debatable issue. Appropriate background information should directly relate to the main point of the essay and indicate the essay's purpose.

The **thesis statement** establishes the controlling idea of the essay, asserts an argument or opinion, and lays forth a preview of the essay's main points.

Ask yourself ...

- ☒ Have you created a unique and concise hook that immediately captures your audience's attention?
- ☒ Does your hook have a direct connection with your essay's main theme?
- ☒ Have you provided a general definition of the topic, issue, or problem you discuss in your essay?
- ☒ Does your background information prepare readers for the argument or explanation presented in your essay? Is your background information relevant to the main purpose of your essay?
- ☒ Does your thesis statement present a debatable argument?
- ☒ Does your thesis statement also contain a controlling idea and a preview of your argument's main points?