

Introductions & Conclusions

Introduction & Conclusion Purposes

Introductory and concluding paragraphs should be considered together because they establish purpose for your reader. The purpose of an Introduction is two-fold:

1. It must hook the reader, enticing him or her into reading further. Why are they reading this? Why should they care?
2. It must present some sense of purpose, either through an explicitly stated thesis or through some implied idea presented in the opening "hook".

Likewise, the conclusion has two purposes:

1. It must recount the central theme or the thesis of the text, either through an explicit statement or through an implicit understanding presented throughout the text.
2. It should encourage the reader to think about the topic critically and creatively, often in a previously unconsidered way, thus spurring the reader intellectually.

Note, however, that unless your professor specifies otherwise, the conclusion should not include the exact same thesis sentence you wrote in the introduction – instead, rephrase the whole statement.

Writing Introductions & Conclusions

To assemble clear introductory and concluding paragraphs, a writer needs three things:

1. A clear sense of audience.
2. A clear sense of purpose.
3. A rhetorical strategy for hooking readers at the start and for spurring them on at the end.

The audience and purpose should guide writers in the construction of a thesis statement. However, whether that statement is explicit at the start or finish, or implied throughout the body, it must *at least* be implied via the opening rhetorical strategy.

Rhetorical Strategies for Hooks

Just as rhetorical strategies are used to present evidence and interest readers in the body of a text, a well-used strategy or strategies will provide the hook and spur needed at the start and finish. Some commonly used strategies include:

- The rhetorical question
Pose the question(s) in the introduction; offer answers in the thesis and the conclusion.
- A story or anecdote
Divide this at the climactic moment most pertinent to the essay. Share the first part in the introduction and the second part at the conclusion.
- Surprising facts or data the reader may not know, sometimes posed as a question
Present facts in the introduction; return to them in light of the body information or argument at the conclusion

• A quote or reference by or to a pertinent figure
Use the quote to establish cause or purpose in the introduction. In the conclusion, return to the quote, or the speaker of the quote, or to an equally powerful quote by another speaker to tie up the loose ends or reaffirm the purpose.

In addition to these, an abbreviated rhetorical mode, in whole or in part, such as a basic comparison and/or contrast, or an illustration, description, or explanation of a process can be used. You might also establish problems (introduction) and solutions (thesis and conclusion) or offer cause (introduction) and effect (thesis and conclusion) relationships. Keep these concise, with enough detail to grab the reader's interest, but not so much that you are writing the body in the introduction. Summarize it!

No matter which strategy is used to introduce the text, all must naturally lead the reader to the author's point or purpose, either in explicit or implicit terms. Furthermore, it is important that the opening strategy and/or content find its way into the conclusion as well, to bring the reader back to the starting point, but with the new information presented throughout the body in mind. This is what will stimulate additional critical and creative (and thus intellectual) thought.

Activity

1. Identify a specific audience and purpose for your text,
2. Write three sets of introductions and conclusions based on three different rhetorical strategies. You and a friend or classmate may wish to try writing introductions and conclusions for each other.

After writing, discuss your paragraphs in terms of language and purpose. Which set works best or worst, and why?