**EAP: Guidelines, Introductions and Conclusions**

**Introductions**

A good introduction paragraph is essential to any academic essay. It sets up your argument and tells the reader what to expect. The **main goals** of the introduction are:

Catch your reader’s attention/Give background on the topic/Present your *thesis statement*–the central point of your essay.

1. **Catch your reader’s attention**:
2. Your first sentence sets the tone of your essay so think carefully about how you want to begin (an effective ‘hook’).
3. Start with something clear and concise (or catchy!) which will spark your reader’s curiosity. Avoid long, dense sentences.
4. Avoid overly broad claims or plain statements of fact.

**How do you write a ‘good hook’?**

1. The ‘hook’ should lead the reader into your essay, giving a sense of the topic you are writing and why it’s interesting.
2. Avoid giving a dictionary definition of your hook, especially if it’s an obvious term that everyone knows.

**Examples**:

The digital camera was an extremely important invention.

The invention of the digital camera was a major turning point in the history of technology.

The first sentence is a dry fact. The second is more interesting because it makes a bold claim aboutexactly *why* this topic is important.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is a famous book from the nineteenth century. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is often read as a crude cautionary tale about the dangers of scientific advancement.

The first offers information everyone knows. The second tells us about the mainstream interpretation of the book and implies this essay will offer a different interpretation.

1. **Give background on your topic**.

Next, give your reader the context they need to understand your topic and argument. Depending on the subject, this may include:

1. Historical, geographical or social context.
2. An outline of the debate you are addressing.
3. A summary of relevant theories or research about the subject.
4. Definition of key terms.

The information should be **broad**, clearly **focused** and **relevant.** Don’t give too much detail, you can mention some points you will return to later but save your evidence and interpretation for the main body of the essay.

Also, how much ‘space’ you need for detail will depend on your topic and the scope of your essay (how long or how complex).

1. **Present your thesis statement – the central point of your essay.**

Now narrow your focus and show exactly what you want to say about the topic. This is your thesis statement–a sentence or two that sums up your overall argument.

**This is the most important part of your introduction**. A good thesis statement isn’t just a statement of fact but a claim that requires evidence and explanation. It is usually written towards the end of your Introduction paragraph.

**Goal**: To clearly convey your position in a debate or your central point about a topic. For example:

As an alternative to the bulky camcorder, the digital phone camera was a groundbreaking new moving image recording tool. It not only provided practical benefits, but also helped change the cultural status of amateur film making.

**Thesis Statement: Why do we need it?**

It gives your writing direction and focus and it gives your reader a concise summary of you main point. Everything else in the ‘body’ of the essay should related back to this thesis (the main idea). E.g.

Despite Oscar Wilde’s claim that art needs no purpose or justification, his work advocates Irish nationalism, women’s suffrage and socialism.

So, a thesis statement summarizes the central points of your essay. It is a **signpost** telling the reader what the essay will argue and why.

**The best thesis statements are**:

* **Concise:** A good thesis statement is short and sweet—don’t use more words than necessary. State your point clearly and directly in one or two sentences.
* **Contentious:** Your thesis shouldn’t be a simple statement of fact that everyone already knows. A good thesis statement is a claim that requires further evidence or analysis to back it up.
* **Coherent:** Everything mentioned in your thesis statement must be supported and explained in the rest of your paper.

**Tips for writing a thesis statement**:

* 1. **Start with a question.**

You should come up with an initial thesis, sometimes called a**working thesis**, early in the [*writing process*](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-writing/writing-process/). As soon as you’ve decided on your [*essay topic*](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-essay/generating-topic-ideas/), you need to work out what you want to say about it—a clear thesis will give your essay direction and structure.

You might already have a question in your assignment, but if not, try to come up with your own. What would you like to find out or decide about your topic?

For example, you might ask:

Has the digital camera had a positive or negative impact on theatre productions? Or:

What impact did the invention of the digital camera have on amateur film makers?

* 1. **Write your initial answer**.

After some initial research, you can formulate a tentative answer to this question. At this stage it can be simple, and it should guide the [research process](https://www.scribbr.com/category/research-process/) and [writing process](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-writing/writing-process/).

The digital camera has had more of a positive than a negative effect on theatre productions. The invention of the digital camera has improved the professional prospects of young film makers.

* 1. **Develop your answer**.

Now you need to consider **why**this is your answer and **how**you will convince your reader to agree with you. As you read more about your topic and begin writing, your answer should get more detailed.

In your essay about the digital camera and film making, the thesis states your position and sketches out the key arguments you’ll use to support it.

* 1. **Refine your thesis statement**.

 A strong thesis statement should tell the reader:

* Why you hold this position
* What they’ll learn from your essay
* The key points of your argument or narrative

The final thesis statement doesn’t just state your position but summarizes your overall argument or the entire topic you’re going to explain. To strengthen a weak thesis statement, it can help to consider the broader context of your topic.

**Example:** Improved thesis statement on internet use.

The negatives of internet use are outweighed by its many benefits for education: it facilitates easier access to information, exposure to different perspectives, and a flexible learning environment for both students and teachers.

Example: Improved thesis statement on the invention of braille. The invention of braille transformed the lives of blind people in the 19th century, but its success depended on mainstream acceptance by sighted teachers, and this process was shaped by debates about disabled people’s place in society.

These examples are more specific and show that you’ll explore your topic in depth.

1. **Map the essay’s structure**

Particularly in longer essays, it’s helpful to end the introduction by signposting what will be covered in each part. Keep it concise and give your reader a clear sense of the direction your argument will take.

This essay begins by discussing the situation of art-house film makers in twentieth-century America. It then describes the invention of the digital camera and the gradual process of its acceptance within the film industry. Subsequently, it explores the wide-ranging effects of this invention on film makers’ professional and cultural lives.

1. **Check and Revise**

As you research and write, your argument might change focus or direction as you learn more.

For this reason, it’s often a good idea to wait until later in the[writing process](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-writing/writing-process/) before you write the introduction paragraph—it can even be the very last thing you write.

When you’ve finished writing the [essay body](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-essay/body/) and [conclusion](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-essay/conclusion/), you should return to the introduction and check that it matches the content of the essay.

It’s especially important to make sure your *thesis statement* accurately represents what you do in the essay. If your argument has gone in a different direction than planned, tweak your thesis statement to match what you actually say. It’s not difficult to lose your way so leaving aside some time (at least 24 hours) will give you a clear perspective on what you have written.

**Checklist: Essay Introductions (in this order!)**

• My first sentence is engaging and relevant.

• I have introduced the topic with the necessary background.

• I have defined any necessary terms.

• My thesis statement clearly presents my main point or argument.

• Everything in the Introduction is relevant to the main body of the essay.

**Types of Essays**

* **Argumentative**: sets up a debate and then clearly states its own position within the debate. In an [argumentative essay](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-essay/argumentative-essay/), your thesis statement should take a strong position. Your aim in the essay is to convince your reader of this thesis based on evidence and logical reasoning.
* **Expository:** In an [expository essay](https://www.scribbr.com/academic-essay/expository-essay/), you’ll aim to explain the facts of a topic or process. Your thesis statement doesn’t have to include a strong opinion in this case, but it should clearly state the central point you want to make, and mention the key elements you’ll explain.

**Example:** Argumentative essay thesis statement.

Although surveillance is viewed negatively by many people, its positive social effects outweigh its downsides. Greater surveillance in public areas helps maintain public order and ensures the personal safety of citizens.

**Example:** Expository essay thesis statement.

The European Renaissance is closely linked to the economic wealth of Italy in the Middle Ages. The development of Italian port towns as major trading posts during the Crusades, along with the establishment of banking systems, made patronage of the arts and sciences possible.

**Example:** Literary Analysis thesis statement (a detailed analysis of a text, i.e., literary, dramatic)

A Miller’s *The Crucible* is as relevant today as it was when it was first written, because of the contemporary political situation in the USA. Racial violence and the attack on free speech are responsible for a proliferation of its production on University campuses this year.

**Example: Introduction Paragraph:**

The invention of Braille was a major turning point in the history of disability. The writing system of raised dots used by visually impaired people was developed by Louis Braille in nineteenth-century France. In a society that did not value disabled people 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 blind people’s needs, Braille was a groundbreaking new accessibility tool. It not only provided practical benefits, but also helped change the cultural status of blindness. This essay begins by discussing the situation of blind people in nineteenth-century Europe. It then describes the invention of Braille and the gradual process of its acceptance within blind education. Subsequently, it explores the wide-ranging effects of this invention on blind people’s social and cultural lives.

1. Historical, geographical or social context.
2. An outline of the debate you are addressing.
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**Conclusions** should:

1. Summarize your research findings, looking back at what you’ve done so far.
2. Re-state the central argument(s) reflecting the thesis statement of your essay/chapter/presentation (so what?)
3. Explore the implications, commenting on the significance of your findings and looking ahead to future work.

Depending on the length/complexity of your conclusion, it can also:

Discuss your study’s implication for the wider field of knowledge;

Recognize the limitations of your study, i.e., that it explored one particular case study; beyond the scope of my research (question)

Acknowledge these limits while also stating your work’s contributions: what have you added to the field? How are you entering into conversation with other research?

Make recommendations for future research-**do further questions arise as a result of your work?** Could your study be replicated on a larger scale or with a different dataset?

Set out recommendations for practice or policy.