

INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION

Why is it important to write a good introduction and conclusion?

The introduction and the conclusion frame the argument of your essay, case study or report. The introduction draws the reader in and the conclusion leaves the reader thinking about the argument made.

How do you structure an introduction?

The introduction is the first impression a reader gets of your work, so it is worth taking time to plan what to include in it. If it does not have a clear argument and a direct outline of what is to come, it can leave the reader confused for the entire essay.

Introductions include:

- An **opening sentence** about the topic that engages the reader's interest, but is not too specifically linked to your argument.
- Some **background** information, which places the topic in context.
- A sentence that establishes a **problem** that you will be exploring (optional).
- A **definition** of a key term (optional).
- A **thesis statement**—the position you will argue (see Writing a Thesis Statement Survival Guide)
- An **outline** of the topics you will cover to develop your argument.
- A **closing sentence** that links to your next paragraph and relates to your main topic.



The introduction moves from general statements to ones more focused on the specific details of the essay at the end.

When do you write the introduction?

It is a good idea to write a preliminary introduction at the beginning of the writing process. However, it is best to revise it before submitting to make sure that your body content matches the argument outlined in the introduction.

TIP

As a general rule, your thesis statement should not be the first sentence in your introduction. But always check what is required in your discipline.

What do you write in a conclusion?

Write the conclusion last, once you have had time to reflect on your points. You need a strong finish to leave a good impression.

Conclusions include:

- A **summary** of the main points made in each paragraph.
- A rewording of the **thesis statement**.
- A summary of any **recommendations** made throughout the essay (optional).
- A general statement about the wider **implications** or applicability of what you have written about. Why is it significant? What is the impact?
- Future research suggestions (optional).



The conclusion should move from specific to more general information (the opposite to the introduction).

TIP

The introduction and conclusion are usually about 10% of your essay each. In an essay they would each form one paragraph. For a report or anything with subheadings it can be a little longer, but one paragraph each is usually appropriate.

How do you begin?

Dot point all the things you want to include in your introduction. Place them in order and then begin forming sentences. Do the same for your conclusion.

When writing the first draft of your introduction and conclusion, do not worry about getting it 'perfect'. Just get your ideas down. You can edit the expression and punctuation later.

Another technique is to try writing the introduction and conclusion together. This makes it easier to establish clear links between the two.

If possible, set your essay aside for a day or two. Re-read your essay, then re-write the introduction and conclusion. This enables you to write with fresh eyes.

TIP

Leave plenty of time for editing. Try to finish writing in advance so you can take a couple of days away from it and then edit your work with a clear mind.

TIP

Learn from the work of others. Pay attention to how established writers begin and conclude journal articles and book chapters. Explore their structure, use of connecting words, and overall academic language and style.

How do you plan?

Plan backwards from the date when your assignment is due. Decide when you want to have your second draft completed and when you want your first draft completed. This will help ensure you leave enough time to write an effective introduction and conclusion for your assignments.

Use the STUDYSmarter assignment date calculator to help you plan all your assignments.

<http://www.student.uwa.edu.au/learning/studysmarter/writesmart/assignmentcalculator>

You should also use a daily planner to set aside time each day for working on assessments and balancing this with exercise and socialising.

TIP

Proof reading is very important. Look for spelling (Aus), grammar, typing errors, repetitive wording, paragraph lengths, connecting sentences and linking words.

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