



Introduction and Outline Worksheet

Your Name:

Date:

1. Read through the guide that follows this worksheet.
2. Create an introductory paragraph. Include the following parts:
 - A. Method of getting reader's attention
 - B. Background information
 - C. Thesis statement with plan of development

3. Complete the rest of your outline. Brief notes for each section will suffice.
 - I. Topic Sentence for first supporting paragraph (first point in thesis): [Insert topic sentence]
 - A. Supporting idea 1 [Describe in a few words]
 - B. Supporting idea 2 [Describe in a few words]
 - C. Supporting idea 3 [Describe in a few words]
 - D. Transition sentence into next paragraph [Describe in a few words]
 - II. Topic Sentence for second supporting paragraph (second point in thesis): [Insert topic sentence]
 - A. Supporting idea 1 [Describe in a few words]
 - B. Supporting idea 2 [Describe in a few words]
 - C. Supporting idea 3 [Describe in a few words]
 - D. Transition sentence into next paragraph [Describe in a few words]
 - III. Topic Sentence for third supporting paragraph (third point in thesis): [Insert topic sentence]
 - A. Supporting idea 1 [Describe in a few words]
 - B. Supporting idea 2 [Describe in a few words]
 - C. Supporting idea 3 [Describe in a few words]
 - D. Transition sentence into next paragraph [Describe in a few words]
 - IV. (Continue support paragraphs until you have fully explained and supported your thesis)
 - V. CONCLUSION: Tie your bow. How will you end your essay in a way that reemphasizes what you learned from this experience/person/etc.

Guide to Writing an Introductory Paragraph and Outline

Every well-written college essay includes an engaging introduction that interests readers and a clear thesis that states the purpose of the essay. A well-written essay is also organized and follows a logical outline.

Writing an Introduction

The introduction to a paper is a very important section, in that it sets the expectations of the reader. The introduction is generally the first paragraph of an essay. Although there is no one formula for constructing a good introduction, in general, an introduction to an essay should accomplish the following:

- **An introduction should attract the reader's attention.** Magazine and newspaper articles often accomplish this with brief but interesting anecdotes, questions that pique the reader's curiosity, something of personal relevance to the reader, or other apt quotations, provocative questions, or statements. While you shouldn't feel that you have to sensationalize, neither should you assume that the reader is interested in what you have to say by default. Very often just raising the interesting issue that your thesis explores is enough to pull your reader in.
- **An introduction should tell the reader what the thesis (the point of the paper) is.** After having read the introduction, the reader should have no doubt about what the central point of your paper is and what you are trying to prove. Your thesis is typically the last one or two sentences of your introduction.

Even in a personal essay, you need to have a controlling statement or purpose that you are trying to achieve with your essay. For example, if you wish to write about your vacation to Nevada, you can't just say that you had a great time in Nevada. Such an essay doesn't really have a topic. Instead, you could approach the essay like this.

When I went to Nevada last year, I realized how important it is to live "in the moment" instead of rushing all the time.

- **An introduction should establish the significance of your point to the reader.** You should convince your audience that they should care about what you have to say. This is achieved by not only an engaging introduction, but more importantly constructing a successful thesis.
- **An introduction can give a preview of how you are going to demonstrate your thesis.** Writers often

summarize in a brief list of three or so points how you are going to back up your thesis, so as to prepare the reader and improve the reader's recognition and retention of those points. Here's an example introductory paragraph:

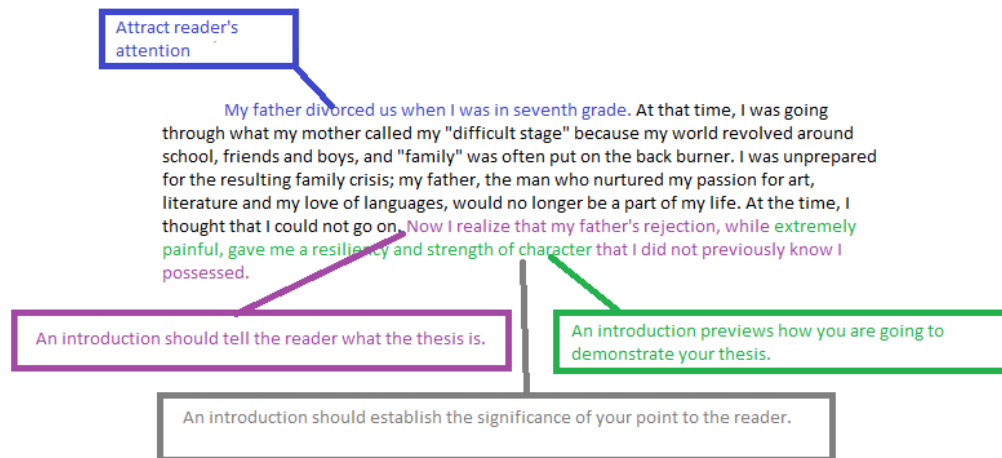


Figure 1: <http://students.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement/introductions.htm>

Writing a Thesis Statement (Controlling Idea)

After you have successfully written your introduction and you have your reader's attention, you then need to state the purpose of your essay. This is otherwise known as your thesis or controlling idea. The purpose of your thesis varies by essay topic (argumentative, persuasive, cause and effect, personal essay, and so on). In your thesis you need to (a) state your topic, (b) your opinion on this topic, and (c) how you intend to prove this.

A simple equation for a personal essay thesis might look something like this:

*Because of X, Y, and Z, **Topic**, I now believe/think/feel/know/etc A, B, and/or C.*

Here are two helpful templates you may use to build your thesis for your personal essay:

Because of _____ I learned that _____.

I never realized _____ until _____.

A simple equation for an argumentative essay thesis might look something like this. Actually, writing is a recursive activity and even though they will not be graded upon writing a thesis,



learning what a thesis is and beginning to deepen their knowledge of crafting a main point needs to come early and come often. It is one of the most prevalent complaints we get, that students do not know how to craft a thesis, even in the upper-division courses.

Specific topic + your opinion or the claim+ the reasons you have for making that claim = Thesis

You can structure your thesis something like this: **Topic** is [*opinion*] because of X, Y, and Z.

or

*Because of X, Y, and Z, **Topic** is/can be seen as/should/should not [*opinion*]*

Now you try creating a thesis!

Try adding a thesis like this to the end of your introduction. You can also use the [thesis generator](#) on the Ashford Writing Center website for more help.

Writing an Outline

Finally, after you have written an interesting introduction and a clear thesis, you need to be sure to organize your paper in the most effective and logical manner. Some essays, like compare and contrast or cause and effect, will have slightly different structures depending on how you are presenting your support points, but for the most part, essays follow the basic outline below. Also, please visit the [Ashford Writing Center](#) and the useful Outline PDF handout.

- I. Introduction
 - A. Method of getting reader's attention
 - B. Background information
 - C. Thesis statement with plan of development
- II. Topic Sentence for first supporting paragraph (first point in thesis)
 - A. Supporting idea 1
 - B. Supporting idea 2
 - C. Supporting idea 3
 - D. Transition sentence into next paragraph
- III. Topic Sentence for second supporting paragraph (second point in thesis)



- A. Supporting idea 1
 - B. Supporting idea 2
 - C. Supporting idea 3
 - D. Transition sentence into next paragraph
- III. Topic Sentence for third supporting paragraph (third point in thesis)
- A. Supporting idea 1
 - B. Supporting idea 2
 - C. Supporting idea 3
 - D. Transition sentence into next paragraph
- IV. (Continue support paragraphs until you have fully explained and supported your thesis)
- V. CONCLUSION: Restate thesis and summarize the supporting ideas.