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EXIT

Intros & Conclusions

Beginning & Ending Your Essays

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Why Do We Write Essays?

Yes, because teachers make you, but there should be a purpose other than just that.

Think of writing essays as practice for writing in the real world.

Want a job? Try writing a boring cover letter for your resume.

Want your boss to notice the work you've been doing? Write a bland memo and see how quickly she responds.

Learning to craft effective introductions will serve you well beyond the parameters of academic writing.

The purposes for why we write may be different, but the intended result always is the same:



Writers must interest their readers and engage them early on.

Intros are the first bit of your writing that readers see; if they're not interested after a few lines, you may have already lost them.

Consider this: you go on a date.

The first half hour is a complete bore, and you already know you'll never see this person again.



The same goes for writing: be uninteresting in your intro and you've already lost most of your readers.

Functions of an Introduction:

- make the reader interested in reading on
- reveal the essay's central idea as expressed in the thesis
- provide background & explanatory information to help the readers understand the essay's *purpose*

Most importantly...

If you're bored writing it, your readers will be bored reading it...



- *Don't be boring!*



Methods of Introductions:

- **use a startling remark, statistic, or memorable quotation** ~ *this can be a quote you found about the issue at hand or a startling statement that you come up with to engage your readers.*
- **ask a question or present a problem** ~ *address your readers directly to engage them and get them thinking about the issue at hand. Just avoid addressing the reader (“you”) in the body of the essay.*
- **challenge a widely-held assumption or opinion** ~ *challenging a widely-held belief engages your readers and makes them want to read on. Provide explanation for your challenge later on in the essay.*
- **use compare/contrast or an analogy** ~ *what can you use to show the similarities or differences that might help further advance the point you’re trying to make on your thesis?*
- **tell an anecdote or describe a scene** ~ *engaging your readers’ senses. Write a mini story that puts the readers into the world of your claim. Let them feel like they’re seeing the world you’re discussing.*
- **provide your own definition of an important term or concept** ~ *don’t just go to a dictionary and pull a definition from it. Dictionary definitions are dull. Think up your own definition and provide a more interesting start to your essay.*

*NOTE: these methods are NOT mutually exclusive. You can mix and match.
Use more than one.*

*Just be aware that using too many could take away from the intro's
effectiveness and clarity.*

Intro Don'ts:



- don't announce your ideas: "The purpose of this essay is..." or "In this essay I'll discuss..."
- don't refer directly to the assignment; use your own way of phrasing things.
- don't announce or apologize for your lack of knowledge: "Even though I'm not an expert..." or "I don't know much about this, but..."

Conclusions

A conclusion is just as important as an introduction.

Imagine that you go on another date, and it goes well. You both walk outside, and, suddenly, your date bails.



All you see is the silhouette of a body walking onto the night. No goodnight, no thank you, no I had a good time. Nothing.

Ending the essay should wrap things up for your readers, making them feel like everything has been finished.

Closing an essay effectively is important so your readers don't feel like you've left them standing on the corner with no ride home.

A good conclusion can also solidify your readers' understanding of the point you're trying to make, enhancing *Coherence*.

Functions of a Conclusion:

- leave your reader satisfied that the discussion is complete
- give readers something to think about or act upon
- remind readers of central idea or thesis of the essay
- summarize & rephrase the most important elements of support from the body of the essay

Methods of Conclusions:



- **offer advice or make a call to action** ~ discussing a problem or issue without offering a solution can come across like empty complaining. Offer a solution for any problems you've discussed.
- **explain how a problem was resolved** ~ if you opened your essay by presenting a problem, then a logical and effective way of ending the essay would be to show how that problem was resolved.
- **ask a rhetorical question** ~ a rhetorical question is a question for which the answer is obvious or for which you don't expect an answer. Come up with a question that relates to your thesis.
- **close with a memorable statement or quotation** ~ the same concept that applies to including memorable statements in your intros applies here.
- **respond to a question in your intro** ~ if you asked a question in the intro of your essay, don't leave your readers hanging. Answer it.

Conclusion Don'ts:



- don't simply repeat thesis ~ rephrase it or rearticulate it so as not to be repetitive
- if you repeat key ideas, don't sound "listy"
- don't include any totally new supporting information
- don't preach or use clichés

Amongst *The Giants*

Along a winding mountain road, about 40 miles after I last glimpsed the Kern River, is a grove of redwoods called *The Trail of 100 Giants*. Amongst these giants is one tree, scarred by a past fire, at the base of which I had placed my mother's ashes. As I traveled back to the giants four years later, the immense feeling that had accompanied me originally had been replaced by a sad longing for a mother that never was, an understanding of what she went through, and a readiness for what was to come. With a lifetime of pain prodding me, I went back there searching for solace. I went back to the giants to make amends with my mother, and it was among these giants where I finally found peace with myself and with my mother.

Get Into Those Skinny Jeans

For most women today, it is "normal" to be on a diet even if they don't need it. Because of all the pressure to be thin, women often times resort to dangerous diets. For example, crash diets are popular when people want to lose weight quickly, but these crash diets are dangerous because they cause the body to lose weight in a matter of days, which is very unhealthy. Women are known to do this all the time, whether to fit into a dress for an upcoming wedding or for a date - these crash diet are a desperate attempt to look and to feel good, if only because they want to look like the models in these ads. Most women struggle with food all the time, and some women become so obsessed with the idea of being thin that they end up with eating disorders. According to researchers at AboutFace.org, "90-95 % of anorexics and bulimics are women." These eating disorders are increasing rapidly among women in our society, and it seems that these "crash diet" ads are determining what the ideal body weight should be to the detriment of a healthy and happy modern woman.

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