

The Introduction

The introductory paragraph introduces the argument of your paper. A well-constructed introductory paragraph immediately captures the interest of your reader and gives appropriate background information about the paper's topic.

The most important function of your paper's introductory paragraph, however, is to present a clear statement of your paper's argument. This sentence is your paper's thesis. Without a thesis, it is impossible for you to present an effective argument.

Three Steps to an Introduction

1. Get the reader's attention by using a "hook."
2. Give some background information if necessary.
3. Write a thesis statement.

The Hook

The introduction has a "hook or grabber" to catch the reader's attention. Some "grabbers" include:

1. Opening with an unusual detail: (Manitoba, because of its cold climate, is not thought of as a great place to be a reptile. Actually, it has the largest seasonal congregation of garter snakes in the world!)
2. Opening with a strong statement: (Cigarettes are the number one cause of lighter sales in Canada!)
3. Opening with a Quotation: (Elbert Hubbard once said , "Truth is stronger than fiction.")
4. Opening with an Anecdote: An anecdote can provide an amusing and attention-getting opening if it is short and to the point.
5. Opening with a Statistic or Fact: Sometimes a statistic or fact will add emphasis or interest to your topic. It may be wise to include the item's authoritative source.
6. Opening with a Question. (Have you ever considered how many books we'd read if it were not for television?)
7. Opening with an Exaggeration or Outrageous Statement. (The whole world watched as the comet flew overhead.)

“Fine arts are important in the curriculum because of what they do for learning,” stated Patty Taylor, arts consultant for the California State Department of Education. In other words, the arts, especially music, should be part of every school’s curriculum at every grade level. Music makes students smarter, gives children something positive to do, and builds self-confidence. Most students don’t have a chance to learn music outside of school, and everyone deserves that opportunity.

The final bell rings. It’s the last day of school, and summer has finally come! Students don’t have to think about school for at least another 2 1/2 months. That is the way it should always be. Schools should continue using the traditional calendar and not a year-round schedule. There are numerous downsides to year-round schooling. It has no positive effects on education, it adds to costs, and it disrupts the long-awaited summer vacation.

One sunny afternoon while walking Blanca, my very sociable bullterrier, I decided to introduce her to Phillip, the mailman. At first, she was friendly, but as Phillip turned to leave, Blanca treacherously leaped for his buttocks and ripped off the back of Phillip’s blue and gray trousers. Fortunately, Phillip was not injured. Nevertheless, I was very concerned about my dog’s behavior, so I took Blanca to my veterinarian to find out why she had acted so aggressively. Dr. Rios, Blanca’s veterinarian, explained that there were three factors which could trigger an aggressive response from almost any dog.

The sun begins to set over a crowded highway filled with rush hour drivers heading home after a long day. A dad driving a minivan filled with screaming children. A woman with the top down and music blazing in her Corvette. And a car weaving back and forth, speeding up then slowing down, then suddenly stopping. No, it’s not a drunk driver. It’s a cell-phone driver. Cell phones are used everywhere, but on the road they are a dangerous distraction to drivers and should be prohibited.

The Conclusion

A piece of persuasive writing usually ends by summarizing the most important details of the argument and stating once again what the reader is to believe or do. The conclusion should clearly connect to the introduction and body of the paper, give a sense of completion, do more than restate your arguments, and give the reader something to think about.

Three Steps to a Conclusion

1. Restate your thesis or focus statement
2. Summarize the main points: The conclusion enable your reader to recall the main points of your position. In order to do this you can paraphrase the main points of your argument.
3. Write a personal comment or call to action.

Personal Comment or Call to Action

1. Prediction - The conclusion may suggest or predict what the results may or may not be in the situation discussed or in similar situations.
2. Question - Closing with a question lets your readers make their own predictions or draw their own conclusions.
3. Call to Action - This closing is a final appeal to reinforce your argument. It stresses the actions that should be taken to bring about the desired result.
4. Quotation - A quotation may summarize, predict, question, or call to action.

It is evident that year-round schooling is not the best option for the school calendar. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the traditional school year. Why change something that works so well? The final bell rings. Let's make sure this bell means that the "real" summer vacation has come.

Once again, music is important because it can make children better students, give them something positive to do, and build their character. Unfortunately, the children who need music lessons the most usually don't have access to them outside of school. That is why music should be offered in every single grade in every school.

Providing junk food in school cafeterias is just an all-around bad idea. We need to eat healthy food so we can reach our fullest academic and physical potential. The food we eat affects our body and mind and we need to take advantage of that! Now that we understand the problem, it's time to fix it by banning the sale of junk food in schools.

Keeping kids healthy, saving money, and helping our school stay clean are strong reasons for installing automatic hand dryers. Every day that goes by without having them means that we are continuing to have problems in our restrooms because we are using paper towels. Let's install automatic hand dryers as soon as possible!

I am not sure when our public schools decided that classroom parties needed to become a part of the school calendar, but I do not see the importance. Children are watching adults all hours of the day and looking up to these adults for guidance. Showing an interest in homework and volunteering in classrooms should be our PTA responsibility, not preparing for parties. Therefore, I do believe schools should ban classroom celebrations. Our tax dollars must be focused on the learning of our children.

Yes, the smell and feel of a new book will always capture me. But, I've grown to like audio books over the last few years. Both are enjoyable and valuable opportunities for adventure! Readers, I encourage you to try an audio book and please, never reject it as not 'real reading'!