

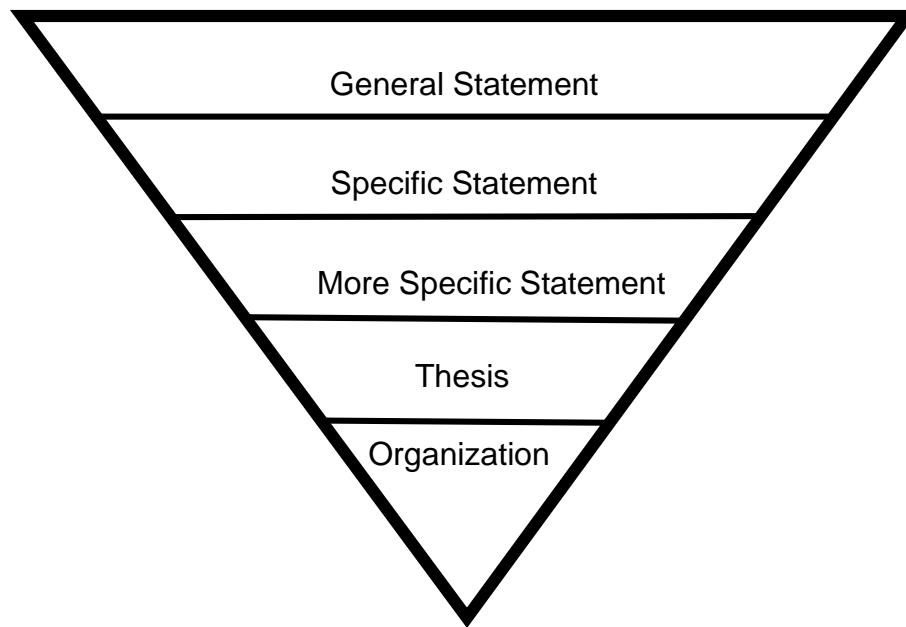
A Guide for Writing Introduction Paragraphs for Academic Essays

WHAT IS AN INTRODUCTION? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The introduction paragraph is the first paragraph in the paper. This paragraph presents the thesis of the paper – the main claim or assertion the author is making through the presentation of supporting information. In addition, this paragraph establishes the context of the paper (Davis, Davis, Stewart, & Bullock (2013)¹). This context should be presented in a manner that is neither so broad that it includes irrelevant information not presented in the body, nor so specific that it goes into too much detail about the information discussed in the body. This paragraph is essential for clear and organized writing. By providing an appropriate context and an effective thesis sentence, the introduction allows the writer to narrow the scope of their paper and helps with ensuring all information and claims relate back to the thesis. Some strategies for creating introductions are discussed below.

THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF AN INTRODUCTION

There are many models for how introduction paragraphs should be written, what they should include, and their specific formatting. If in doubt about the exact format and/or contents, refer to the professor's specific preferences. However, when writing for academic purposes, the inverted triangle model is the most frequently used structure (see diagram on page 2). This method presents the introduction in a deductive structure (general to specific) (Davis et al., 2013).



General Statement The general statement is intended to be a broad (but not overly broad) statement that introduces the general paper topic.

Specific and More Specific Statements These start providing the reader with essential background information required to understand your paper topic and the general context in which your paper fits. Introduce only some of the essential information without going into too much detail, as that is the purpose of the paper's body. If applicable to the assignment or purpose of writing, it can be a good idea to use this section to establish a problem that your paper will address.

Thesis Broadly defined, the paper's thesis is your assertion. It is the main claim you are making that will be supported in the body of your paper. The exact format and characteristics of the thesis will vary depending on the type of paper you are writing. Davis *et al.* (2013) explain that thesis statements are tailored to specific types of writing, including persuasive, research, argumentative, and analysis papers. When writing the paper, use the thesis statement to check that the content in the paper's body is developing the assertion you made.

Paper Organization The last section of the introduction paragraph should outline how your paper is organized. While this element may be omitted depending on the nature and length of the paper, it is especially useful when writing larger, more complex papers that include multiple sections. This provides the reader with a general idea of how the paper is laid out and the topics that will be discussed. Combined with the use of effective topic sentences in the paper's body, this part of the introduction contributes to the paper's overall organization and clarity.

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

General
statement

Anyone who has ever taught knows that the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else. This fundamental principle underpins the concept of peer tutoring, where “peers” are generally regarded as being individuals of the same or similar intellectual status and/or social standing. Peer assisted learning (PAL) or acquisition of knowledge and skills through active helping and supporting among status peer equals, is now being increasingly used in medical education. Peer assisted learning is an efficient and effective way of preparing medical students for their future role as educators. While initial studies reported that PAL was inferior to faculty assisted learning, more recent studies suggest that in some situations learning outcomes achieved may be comparable. Informal PAL can be witnessed in medical colleges; however, evidence of formally organized PAL sessions is lacking. Hence, exploring the utility of this method of learning in our medical colleges may provide some strength in paving the way for inclusion of PAL in the curriculum.

Specific
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More
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Thesis and Paper Organization