

Introductions and conclusions are integral parts of a paper. While interconnected, each has a distinct purpose and provides organization, context, and framing. This handout covers general concepts for writing introductions and conclusions, but always work with your audience and assignment in mind.

## Introductions

The introduction explains the paper's topic and gives the reader information to understand it. The length of an introduction varies based on assignment, ranging from one paragraph to many. The following sections outline the basic elements of an introduction and provide strategies for revising the introduction throughout the writing process.

### **Writing an Introduction**

At the beginning of your paper, it can be helpful to introduce broad ideas to provide context. After establishing context, limit the paper's scope by narrowing your ideas and stating the main point of the paper. Introductions often culminate with the main point written as a guiding statement or thesis. The following examples illustrate what a basic introduction looks like.

**Introduce the Topic & Engage Readers:** To start an introduction, use strong attention-grabbing elements, such as questions, quotes, statistics, and stories. These elements help introduce your topic and get readers invested enough in your paper to continue reading.

**Example:** Sam Nield once said, "There is no parking problem on campus." But is that true?

**Explain Background Information:** In deciding what to include as necessary context, consider what the audience values and what they already know.

**Example:** The university has twelve student parking lots at various distances from campus.

**Identify the Larger Conversation:** Specify how the paper works with, responds to, or disagrees with existing research or conversations about the topic.

**Example:** *The Campus Newspaper* has often written about parking in a broad sense, but this paper provides specific solutions to the problem.

**Define Terms:** Since readers may understand or use words in different ways, define key terms for clarity.

**Example:** The term *Yellow Lot* refers to student parking.

**Include a Main Point:** At the end of the introduction, your main point, thesis, or guiding statement makes a claim and outlines the paper's structure. This can also take the form of a research question.

**Example:** Campus parking is a problem that can be solved by investing in public transportation.

**Confirm Audience Appropriateness:** Different assignments have specific expectations for style and tone; verify that the language is appropriate for the paper.

### **Revising the Introduction**

During the writing process, the main idea and supporting points may change as you learn more about the topic. After drafting your paper, review the introduction and consider the following:

- **Check** that information given in the introduction is necessary, relevant, and not repetitive.
- **Ensure** that the tone of the introduction matches the tone of the rest of the paper.
- **Verify** that the main idea included in the introduction is still the focus of the paper.
- **Confirm** that the main idea is well-supported throughout the paper.

## Conclusions

The conclusion of your paper emphasizes your main points, reminds readers of the paper's key takeaways, and gives readers a sense of closure. The following sections outline elements of a basic conclusion and strategies for showing readers the significance of your work.

### *Reviewing Your Paper*

Your conclusion should review the content of your paper. Reviewing content will take different forms, but most conclusions include the following:

**Return to Elements from the Introduction:** Questions, quotes, statistics, or stories used in the introduction can be referred to within the conclusion to provide a sense of cohesion.

**Example:** Despite what Sam Nield and others have said, there is a parking problem on campus.

**Summarize the Content of the Paper:** Remind readers of the essential ideas you have discussed.

**Example:** To reiterate, many complicated factors affect parking on campus. The number of empty spaces is not the only metric. Administrators are not considering the distance to buildings.

**Synthesize Collected Evidence:** Reiterate how the evidence supports the points.

**Example:** Studies conducted by Johnson show that investing in public transportation would bring students closer to buildings in a more efficient way than the current parking lots.

**Review the Paper's Scope:** Remind readers of the focus and limitations of your work.

**Example:** Admittedly, my argument does not consider certain byproducts of converting to a public transportation campus, such as the effects this may have on student schedules or on already existing parking lots.

**Reiterate Main Idea:** Reformulate your main point, thesis, or guiding statement. It may be more detailed, nuanced, and evidence-based than the original. If you have included a research question in your introduction, state your answer to that question.

**Example:** Nevertheless, if the university wants a permanent parking solution, they need to abandon parking altogether and invest in public transportation.

### *Providing Significance*

At the end of the paper, conclusions should clearly direct readers to feel, think, or act a certain way. This section shows different ways to conclude, but remember that not every approach will work for every paper.

**Offer a Solution or Recommendation:** If the paper discusses a problem or controversy, provide specific steps that help resolve the issue.

**Example:** To fix the parking problem on campus, the university needs to build more parking lots.

**Urge Readers to Action:** Invite readers to respond directly to the information presented.

**Example:** Students should bike to campus to reduce the number of cars in parking lots.

**Call for Further Research:** If any significant unaddressed issues remain, consider outlining what further research needs to be conducted to address these issues.

**Example:** Administrators should research how other campuses integrate public transportation.

**Speculate:** Sometimes, there may not be definite answers in a paper, but a resolution can still be provided by offering a plausible solution.

**Example:** Perhaps changing the cost of parking on campus would encourage students to walk.