

Writing Introductions

The purpose of the introduction is to introduce the specific topic of the essay, give some relevant details for better understanding and present the main idea (the thesis statement). Here are the main parts of the introduction:

1. Opening sentence
2. Basic facts and background to help introduce the specific topic
3. Thesis statement, including purpose and plan

1. Possible opening sentences:

- a. A general statement about the topic
- b. An interesting quotation
- c. An interesting story
- d. A surprising or interesting fact

___ “Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration,” said the famous American inventor Thomas Edison.

___ Few people realise that the U.S.—one of the richest countries in the world—has a serious problem of poverty and hunger.

___ Michael Jackson is one of the most important performers of the 20th century.

___ On December 1st, 1955, Rosa Parks was riding a bus in Montgomery, Alabama.

2. Selecting information for the topic and background section

(a) Choose basic details to introduce your topic quickly: Who? What? Where? When? (b) Then choose some facts connected to your specific topic (focus). For example, if you want to focus on a musician’s success, you might choose some facts about hit songs, CD sales, successful concerts tours, special events and awards.

3. The thesis statement makes a claim (or opinion) about your focused topic. It may also state the purpose of the essay. Finally, the thesis statement can indicate the plan of the essay. Look at the two thesis statements below. Does each explain the purpose or give an opinion about the specific topic?

(1) This essay will look at how Jobs’ iPod and the iTunes Music Store changed the way people bought and listened to music.

(2) Walt Disney’s idea for a family-oriented theme park was the key to the success of Disney Land.

Exercise I: Look at the sentences below and decide if each is useful (1) as an opening (2) as topic / background or (3) as a thesis statement / plan.

..... Active in the Civil rights movement, Robeson travelled widely, performed, sang and gave speeches to help bring freedom to people around the world. His views and activities brought severe criticism during the 1950s Cold War, and his reputation was destroyed. As one friend observed, Robeson was "the most persecuted, the most ostracized, the most condemned black man in America."

..... Paul Robeson was a talented African American athlete, actor, scholar and author who is mostly forgotten in America today.

..... This essay looks at some of the most severe problems that Robeson faced, in particular, the campaign by the American government in the 1950s to silence him by taking away his passport.

WRITING A DRAFT INTRODUCTION:

Write a thesis statement in 3 below. Then, choose one of the strategies above for an opening sentence. Write your opening sentence in 1 below. Finally, select some background information to help introduce your topic and thesis statement.

1. OPENING SENTENCE

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2. SELECTED BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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3. THESIS STATEMENT

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