

ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION INFO SHEET

Academic Writing: Essay Introductions (AW: EI)

A good introduction is key to providing your reader with initial impressions of your argument in a fluent and well-structured essay. It must link to the essay question and detail of your response to the assignment, giving the reader an initial impression of your argument. When writing your introduction remember: it is about ten per cent of your total essay length; introduces the topic in a general way; outlines the main points in your essay; and includes your thesis statement.

Learn about:

- The key aspects of the introduction

See other **Info Sheets** on topic sentences, an essay thesis statement and analysing the assignment task

The introduction is made up of three sections. The structure includes:

- the grab and bridge,
- the map and
- a thesis statement. The thesis statement can be placed before the map. Sometimes writers leave out the grab and start with the bridge.

You may think that you have to write your introduction first, but that isn't true, and it isn't always the most effective way to develop a good introduction. You may find that you don't clearly know what you are going to argue at the beginning of the writing process, and only through reading, note making and drafting your paper do you discover your main argument.

Write the thesis statement first but present it last in your introduction

The part of the introduction that tells readers your viewpoint is called your thesis statement. This is an essential item as it is your direct answer to the assigned question, so it is a good idea to use the assignment question as a jumping off point. **This should be the first part of the assignment you write** as it is the best way to write down briefly what you are thinking that you want to argue, but you may change a little or a lot after you have done some reading and wind up arguing something slightly or even radically different by the time you've read some articles and written some notes. Unpacking the assignment in an analytical way and doing the basic readings provided will help you form an opinion, which will help to form the thesis, direct your essay plan and research gathering phases.

The grab

Make sure that the first sentence actually says something useful in an interesting and polished way. It must grab the attention and place your topic into context. Care must be taken that the **grab** you use is appropriate for the topic and the content. It can take the following forms:

- relate a dramatic anecdote or scenario or an interesting observation
- expose a commonly held belief
- present surprising facts and statistics
- use a fitting quotation
- ask a provoking question or make a statement
- define a key term.

We will focus on two popular grabs that are easy to use and suitable for academic essays.

Using a statement: A grab may make a statement and places the topic in context.

For quite some time, the Australian lifestyle has impacted heavily on the natural environment.

The quote: In the following example, the writer uses a quote from a novel as the hook when discussing the effects of peer group pressure in advertising.

‘It was the best of times; it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief... we had everything before us.’

The bridge

The bridge explains how the grab is relevant to the thesis: it ‘walks’ your readers from that attention getter to the main idea of your essay, or the thesis. This can be done by rewording the question to show how **you** will approach it. Providing background information in an essay introduction scientific, historical, cultural, or even personal, also serves as a bridge to link the reader to the topic of an essay. The bridge is usually only a sentence or two long.

The map

The map presents all the main points that the body will develop. It must clearly reflect the thesis statement. There is no use saying in your thesis statement that video games can assist children to develop skills if most of your main points clearly show that you think playing games is harmful.

To compose the map or outline for the introduction, make a numbered list of the main ideas (i.e. topic sentences of the body paragraphs) on another piece of paper and then rewrite that list so that it flows smoothly through two or three sentences.