

Directed Learning Activity: Writing Effective Introductions

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OBJECTIVE: To understand the elements of an effective introduction and to choose appropriate strategies for specific essay.

ACTIVITY: (suggested time 20 – 25 minutes)

1. First, the tutor reviews with the student some basic information on introductions, as follows:

Introductions are important. They arouse a reader's interest and introduce the subject. In short, they're the paper's "first impression." But you don't have to write them first. In fact, many students prefer launching right into the body of the essay before they tackle intros and conclusions.

*Whatever your style, you'll probably put your thesis/question somewhere near the end of the paragraph and provide some important background information directly before. That background information depends on two key elements: your **intended audience** and what they need to know, and **the purpose** of your essay*

But that still leaves the very beginning, which is a good place to "hook" the reader's attention. Here are some suggestions for that beginning hook:

- Begin with a **quotation**. Just make sure you explain its relevance
- Begin with a **question** (but only one or two)
- Begin with an acknowledgment of an **opinion opposite** to the one you plan to take.
- Begin with a very **short story** or anecdote that has a direct bearing on your paper
- Begin with a startling or **interesting fact**
- Begin with **paradox**, that is, an apparent contradiction.
- Begin with an **analogy**. Make sure it's original but not too far-fetched
- Do **not** begin with a dictionary definition of a word unless it is a very unusual word that many readers will not understand.

2. Next, the tutor should help the student consider the topics below and determine an intended audience and writer's purpose for each topic. Consider "What does my audience already know about the topic? What do they need to know to understand the rest of my essay?"

3. The student should then decide on an effective "hook" to gain the reader's attention at the beginning of that essay.

1. You are writing an essay in which you analyze the effects of parental expectations on you or another person.

2. You are writing an essay in which you analyze the reasons you have set a particular goal.

3. You are writing an essay in which you discuss the reasons people form cliques or the effects of cliques on those inside and outside the group.

4. You are writing an essay on the reasons for the growing homeless population in the U.S.

5. You are writing an essay in which you discuss a challenge you have faced in your life, focusing on the way it has affected you and the way in which you have overcome it.

4. Finally, if time allows, have the student write out an effective introduction for one or two of the topics.

REVIEW: Tutor asks the student to summarize what an introduction needs to do. (Answer: Catch a reader's interest and give needed background on the subject.) Also ask, "What do you need to consider before you know how much background to give?" Answer: The intended audience and the purpose of the essay.