

INTRODUCTIONS

An introduction is the first part of an essay and it is important to make a good first impression.

- An introduction serves as a reader's roadmap for an essay
- The length of the introduction is less important than its strength
- A weak introduction can cause readers to quickly lose interest in the essay
- A strong introduction will engage readers and entice them to continue reading

AN INTRODUCTION NEEDS TO DO THREE THINGS:

(Usually in the following order)

1. Spark the reader's interest
2. Guide the reader toward the thesis statement
3. Clearly present the thesis to the reader

INTRODUCTION STYLE SAMPLES:

- **Begin with Background or Historical Information:**

Identity theft is not a new crime. Throughout history, unscrupulous individuals have pretended to be people they are not, often with the goal of political, social, or financial gain. With the right appearance and demeanor, people have falsely presented themselves as kings and bishops. Today, in the information age, identity theft is a far more prevalent problem. With access to names, Social Security numbers, and other personal information, thieves are able to steal identities, leaving the victims struggling to clear their good names. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.

- **Begin with a Quotation:**

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago claims that he "who steals my purse steals trash / . . . But he that filches from me my good name / Robs me of that which not enriches him, / And makes me poor indeed" (3.3.157-161). Today, identity theft is a new way that thieves steal both the "purses" and the good names of innocent victims, and these thieves are enriching themselves at the expense of their victims. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.

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- **Begin with an Interesting or Surprising Fact:**

Identity fraud is the fastest growing crime in the United States. In 2004, over nine million Americans, or approximately one person in 24, became victims of identity fraud or identity theft, at a cost to the economy of 52.6 billion dollars ("Identity Fraud Survey Report," 2005). Because many cases of identity fraud and identity theft may go unreported, the numbers could be even higher. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.

- **Begin with the Definition of an Important Term:**

Our identity is what makes us unique. It is "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual," (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) and when one is a victim of identity theft, it is this "distinguishing character" that is stolen: one's name, address, Social Security number, employment history, credit history, and more. It therefore is no wonder that victims of identity theft often feel a deep sense of violation as they struggle to reclaim their good names. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.

- **Begin with a Short Narrative:**

Joe Stevens was finally ready to purchase a home. He spent years putting money into a savings account, paid off his credit cards, and diligently paid every bill on time. Confident of his good credit rating, Joe visited the bank to inquire about a mortgage, but he discovered startling information: Joe defaulted on a home loan, had \$40,000 in credit card debt, and had a car repossessed for lack of payment. Joe Stevens, like many Americans, is a victim of identity theft. Instead of preparing to move into a new home, Joe began the long journey to restore his good name and to reclaim his identity. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.

WHAT TO AVOID:

- Avoid beginning with overly vague and general statements or broad generalizations
- Avoid beginning with dictionary definitions obvious to readers
- Avoiding beginning with a direct statement of what you, as the writer, are doing
- Avoid over-long introductions

PRO TIP:

Write the introduction last.