

## INTRODUCTIONS

### WHAT IS AN INTRODUCTION?

The introduction, introductory paragraph, or opening paragraph is the first paragraph of an essay. Generally these paragraphs begin broadly and gradually narrow in focus. They introduce the main idea of an essay and explain why the topic is important. Because this is the beginning of an essay, it is important to make a good first impression.

### PIQUE INTEREST:

1. Introduce a general topic and its specific focus
2. Include intriguing information, such as a surprising fact or statistic
3. Indicate the inherent interest or importance of the topic. Why is it worth investigating?

### PROVIDE CONTEXT:

4. Acquaint the reader with the issues, theories, or events to make sense of the following arguments
5. Indicate what others have already found, and what is still unanswered
6. Define key terminology or specialized language

### STATE A THESIS:

7. State the central claims and specific opinions being explored
8. Take a stance on the topic and explain why
9. Express the overall purpose of the essay
10. Often a single, debatable sentence

### AVOID:

- X Don't flatly announce intentions: "This essay will..."
- X Don't make sweeping statements: "Since the beginning of history..."
- X Don't use a dictionary/encyclopedia definition: "According to Webster's dictionary..."
- X Don't open with a quote, cliché or rhetorical question: "Whom among us has not wondered..."

### SEE ALSO:

- MUOWL's "Getting Started" [[Slides](#) & [Handout](#)]
- MUOWL's "Thesis Statements" [[Handout](#)]

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