



School of Liberal Arts

University Writing Center

*"Because writers need readers"*

Cavanaugh Hall 427      University Library 2125  
(317)274-2049              (317)278-8171

[www.iupui.edu/~uwc](http://www.iupui.edu/~uwc)

---

## *Writing Introductions*

*An introduction has a special function in your paper. First, it must spark an interest in readers to make them continue reading. The introduction must also lay a foundation for the body of the essay and the thesis overall. Therefore, it is crucial to pay special attention to the construction of the introductory paragraphs. Make sure you understand the assignment and the instructor's expectations before you start your paper.*

### **Strategies which usually work:**

- Ask questions which will be answered in your text.
- Use an unusual fact or piece of evidence that will make your reader curious.
- Highlight a startling or unusual piece of information that triggers the reader's interest and that is related to the purpose of the essay.
- Develop a description of a person, place, or concept that will be explored in the essay.
- Present background information that will intrigue the reader and will also serve as a foundation for your thesis and the rest of the essay.

### **Strategies writers usually avoid:**

- Avoid opening your introduction with general information everybody already knows.
- Avoid announcing what you will do, as in "this essay will be about..." or "In this paper, I will..." However, make sure you know your assignment. In some cases, this strategy could apply.
- Making promises you can't/won't keep. For example, don't pose questions you are not going to answer, don't use unusual facts or information that only shows part of the truth (the rest revealed later)..this tricks the reader.

## Concrete Examples of Introductions

1. **Direct Openers:** *may be general statement expressing a controlling idea.*  
Such a statement should be clear and concise.

Poor: Looking at different types of liquor advertisements, one can see that  
Different methods to get the consumer to buy their products.

Better: Liquor advertisements are designed to appeal to a variety of potential customers.

2. **Indirect Openers:** use specific and concrete language to establish rapport with the reader and then lead to the controlling idea. There are several options you could choose:

- A. **Fronting:** to create more interest, you might rewrite the opening sentence  
About the liquor ads as follows:

Romance, glamour, exotic travel—whatever our secret fantasies, liquor ads skillfully combine a subtle promise of their fulfillment with an inviting message about the advertised products.

- B. **Opening a question:** this strategy tends to stimulate thinking about other answers, especially when the answer is not obvious. You can immediately engage the reader's interest.

Are you short? Overweight? Or both? If so, forget about becoming a high school principal. Recent research has shown that school superintendents rate tall and slim applicants much higher than short and chubby ones. Perhaps these results say something about society's ideal image of a leader.

- C. **Opening with an anecdote:** a "live" opener could be a story or concrete example

The more your handwriting leans to the right the more passionate you are. If it leans left, you are emotionally inhibited. Do you round the top of your letter "m"? Then your thinking pattern is slow and methodical. A V-shaped M-top shows you to be an investigative thinker, while a needle-point M-top reveals a fast, comprehensive pattern of thinking. If you apply for an important position in some companies, your handwriting may be subjected to such an analysis to determine your suitability for the job.

- D. **Creating suspense:** you can often get the reader to read on by implying but withholding some vital information.

From everywhere it assaults us. It gets ahead of us; we take vacations to escape from it, but it waits for us at our destinations when we arrive. It pollutes the environment, jostles our psyches, rattles our nerves, and erodes the tiny delicate hairs in our ears that transport sound to our brains. It is the brutal invader of inner space..noise.

Revised May 2008

---

Source: Daiker, Kerek, et al. *The Writer's Options*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Harder & Row, 1990.