

Introductions

The purpose of the introduction paragraph is to gain the attention and introduce the topic the reader. It is important that the reader understands how the attention getter and topic of the paper are related. If you are writing about a specific text, refer to the full title and author's full name in the transition from the attention getter to the thesis statement.

Ways to Begin Introductions

- Quotation: Start with a relevant quotation from the primary text or a secondary source.
 - Example: The French poet, Marie de France, once said of the state of women, "You have to endure what one can't change." However, characters from Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Elisabeth Phelps' *The Story of Avis* would challenge this thought.
- Definition: Start with the definition of a word that is relevant to the focus and thesis of the essay. However, do not define commonly used words; the word should be intriguing or surprising to the reader.
 - Example: Webster's dictionary defines "duality" as the quality or condition of being two or twofold. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Minister's Black Veil," there is a strong symbol of duality. The knowledge of the reader is different from the knowledge of the community in the story, exemplifying the duality theme.
- Interesting Fact: Start with a fact that is relevant to the thesis and focus of the paper. ○ Example: It is not a surprising statistic that 70 percent of Americans favor ending the Electoral College (Kadransky). With the winner-take-all system of the Electoral College, it is understandable how so many individuals can feel like their votes do not have any substance in the presidential general election.
- Rhetorical Question: Start with a rhetorical question that you do not necessarily answer in the paper. The goal is to stimulate the reader to think about the question.
 - Example: How can a country that puts so much moral significance and importance on the idea of freedom and liberty for all citizens have kept a significant amount of the population in perpetual bondage and slavery for so many years? It is a question that has no one specific answer. In colonial America, between 1619 and 1776, black slavery was endemic and grew even stronger because of institutions like the Trans-Atlantic slave route and the agricultural economy of the southern colonies.

Example Paragraph

Notice the attention getter in the first sentence, the transition including the title and author in the middle, and the thesis statement at the end of the paragraph.

Is it ever acceptable to abandon a family member? Numerous situations may lead people to consider fleeing their own relatives, and many people struggle with this difficult decision. Initially, it may seem cruel to leave relatives forever. However, in James Joyce's short story "Eveline," the reader is left with the impression that Eveline should have chosen to depart from her abusive father. This decision, though, would have required strength and confidence that Eveline does not have; years of living with abuse have eroded her resolve. Instead of escaping, she decides to keep her pledge to her mother and stay with her cruel father. Eveline's decision to stay with her father reflects the character's weakness, vulnerability, and insecurity.