DEVELOPING YOUR POINT USING EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Effective Introductions

An effective introduction serves the following purposes:

- It introduces the essay topic.
- It explains the importance of the essay topic and/or gives necessary background information about the topic.
- It hooks the reader’s interest.
- It presents the essay’s main idea in a thesis statement, which usually is placed last in the introduction.

The following examples describe and illustrate several types of introductions students can use to effectively begin their essays. The thesis statement in each introduction is underlined.

An interesting illustration or anecdote
The Wooten family makes a point of sharing the evening meal as special family time. Every evening, just as the family begins to dine and enjoy each other’s company, the phone begins its non-stop ringing with unwanted harassment from telemarketers. Thankfully, the family can now put a stop to the harassment. The National Do Not Call Registry is open for business, putting consumers in charge of the telemarketing calls they get at home.

A surprising fact or statement
Nearly one in seven Americans has key clinical data missing from their medical files, according to a report in The Journal of the American Medical Association. In 44 percent of cases the absent information would have impacted a doctor’s diagnosis, potentially putting patients’ health at risk. Individuals can take a few simple steps to maintain accurate and accessible personal health records to safeguard their well-being.

A direct quotation
In 1961 a copy writer named Shirley Polykoff was working for the Foote, Cone & Belding advertising agency of the Clairol hair-dye account when she came up with the line: “If I’ve only one life to live, let me live it as a blond!” In a single slogan, she created one of the many effective advertising lines during the feminist movement of the 1960s.

A definition
Hope is belief that the impossible is possible. Hope is the future counted in the present. Hope is a light, a map, and a compass. Hope gave me the will to fight and survive cancer.
A contradiction or opposing view

Many wanna-be runners don’t even try because they believe they don’t have the right physique. Their legs are too short. Their stomach is too big. Their shoulders are too broad. Their body weight is too much. These people are wrong. The body is unimportant. The mind is everything. Running is not a physical sport but a mental one.

A vivid description

Two gas stations and a car repair shop were barely visible through the rusty open hoods of dismantled race cars. A man clad in overalls selling roasted peanuts from the back of his truck fanned away flies with an old newspaper. These are a few sights at the unpretentious intersection that is the small town of Barberville in Northwest Mississippi. To some, the settlement along the corner of U.S. 17 and State Road 40 represents one of the area’s last strongholds of unspoiled country life.

A general or historical background

Charles Darwin was born in 1809 on the same day as Abraham Lincoln. Even as a boy, Darwin’s consuming interest in nature was evident. When he was not reading nature books, he was in the fields and forests fishing, hunting, and collecting insects. His father, an eminent physician, could see no future for a naturalist and sent Charles to the University of Edinburgh to study medicine. But Charles found medical school boring and distasteful. He quit college and volunteered to serve on a ship’s crew for a voyage around the world. It was a tour that would have a profound effect on Darwin’s thinking and eventually on the thinking of the whole world.

EXERCISE Read the following four introductory paragraphs. Underline the thesis statement and identify the type of introduction used in each one.

a. A direct quotation
b. A surprising statement or fact
c. An interesting illustration or anecdote
d. A contradiction or opposing view
e. A vivid description
f. General or historical background

1. Heat kills! In fact, excessive heat is the number one weather-related killer, causing more fatalities per year than floods, lightning, tornadoes, hurricanes, winter storms, and extreme cold, according to the National Weather Service’s storm data from 1994-2003. Therefore, when you exercise in warm, humid temperature, protect yourself by taking a few sensible safety measures.

2. Frederick Douglass is credited with the plea that “the Negro be not judged by the heights to which he has risen, but by the depths from which he has climbed.” Judged on that basis, the African-American woman embodies all the modern miracles of the modern world.

3. The roll of honor read at the 9/11 ceremonies was a tapestry of America, of native-born Americans of all ethnic origins and more recent immigrants. Of course, we know too well that some of the assassins and others plotting against American were immigrants who betrayed our ideals, so it is natural that many people feel we should now close the door altogether, beginning with immigrants from
Muslim countries. This belief is wrong. What is long overdue, however, is a sustained national dialogue on immigration.

4. When we first saw Henry, we knew he had to be ours. He had only been recently rescued from a cruel breeder who supplied greyhounds to local race tracks. We were told that the breeder caged Henry in a metal crate with shredded newspaper for bedding for 18-22 hours each day. He fed Henry cheap 4-D meat for Greyhounds. The “D” stands for dying, diseased, disabled, and dead livestock. Henry had barely survived the E. coli poisoning from this feed. At one time, almost every detail of Henry’s skeleton could be seen beneath his thin skin. The fact is that these kinds of abuses are more common than not. Greyhound racing should be outlawed.

EFFECTIVE CONCLUSIONS

An effective conclusion fulfills the following purposes:

- It brings the essay to an end.
- It restates the essay’s main idea and sums up the major points in the essay.

The following examples describe and illustrate several types of conclusions you can use to effectively and powerfully end your essay.

A question

Doesn’t the American public want to experience the well-being that results from a healthful diet and regular exercise?

A quotation

Just as renowned coach of the Green Bay Packers Vince Lombardi said, “The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will.”

A call to action

This is not a time of indecision or hesitation. This is a time for commitment and action. Tell your federal, state, and local governments that you demand a coordinated response plant for natural disasters.

A suggestion

Your best friend is the one who will tell you a hard truth for your own good.

A warning about consequences

If instruments used for ear and body piercing are not properly cleaned and sterilized between clients, then the customer could contract HIV, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C.
A vivid image
When we allow freedom to ring from every village and hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all God’s children, black men and white men, Jews, and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the Old Negro Spiritual – Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty; we are free at last!

A summary
Therefore, it is especially important to wash your hand before, during, and after you prepare food, before you eat, after you use the bathroom, after handling animals or animal waste, when your hands are dirty, and more frequently when someone in your home is sick.

EXERCISE – Read the following four conclusions. Identify the type of conclusion for each selection.

a. A question  
b. A quotation  
c. A call to action  
d. A suggestion  
e. A warning about consequences  
f. A vivid image  
g. A summary

_____ 1. Fellow citizens, we will meet violence with patient justice – assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come.

_____ 2. “The crew of the space shuttle Challenger honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and ‘slipped the surly bonds of earth’ to ‘touch the face of God.’”

_____ 3. The measure of a student’s achievement is not in the grade from a teacher, too often these days a symbol of high inflation and low value, but in the wisdom gained from learning. When A stands for average, do grades mean anything at all?

_____ 4. Our life on earth has already reaped many benefits from past and current space exploration. The establishment of a human colony on the moon would further enhance the quality of life on this planet. Products designed for independent life on the moon will someday become part of everyday life on earth, advancing research in robotics, communications, medicine, and computer technologies. We should shoot for the moon!