

Mapping an Introduction

The introduction of a thoughtful academic essay must be substantial. Having finished it, the reader should have a very clear idea of the author's purpose in writing. Namely, after reading an introduction, you should ask yourself where you think the rest of the paper is headed, what the individual paragraphs in its body will address, and what the general nature of the conclusion will be. If you're right, it's because the introduction has laid out in a *clear and detailed fashion the theme and the general facts which the author will use to support it*.

While this is merely a template, and by no means the only way to skin a cat¹, an introduction should try to capture the reader's attention by being **inviting**. Draw the reader into your discussion with a sentence or two that does work, and dose so by intriguing the reader with an interesting or curious perspective on the topic.

Work then to establish some context and ideas about the paper and the sources that will be brought forward in the discussion. There's no need to see the writer at work here, e.g. *In this essay I'd like to discuss ham and potatoes and why we're losing American values by eating too few pork and tatter-tots each week*.

Instead, **EXPLAIN** the set-up of the discussion that will follow and the important elements or sources that we'll need to understand the concern/problem/argument/position you will lay out in your thesis statement.

Move then to a concrete thesis statement—usually a sentence or two—that fully articulates what the concern of the paper is and where the discussion will go. This is a **BIG CLAIM** here and can't possibly be compelling or persuasive without long-form support from the body paragraphs that follow.

¹ Skin a dog? Is that better? Or a lamb? Too cute? Or a cow, because it's not as cuddly? Don't worry, you probably do so all the time—just look at your shoes.

Let's begin with a *very* modified 3 step process to start mapping out your introduction:

1. What is the invitation? What can you say about your writing project that is interesting or curious?
2. This is the context and understanding portion—what topics, sources, ideas, themes will arise in this paper? What can we expect?
3. The **thesis** should carefully articulate the concern and theme of the paper. What is the BIG CLAIM in this essay?