

PARAGRAPHS: INTRODUCTORY AND CONCLUDING

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPHS:

The beginning paragraph should contain the main idea of the essay presented in an interesting manner. Generally, an introductory paragraph should contain at least 5 to 7 sentences beginning with general statements and moving finally to a very specific thesis.

Purpose of the Introductory Paragraph:

- Attract the attention of the readers (promote interest).
- Lead readers to the thesis by first dealing with the general subject.
- State the thesis.

How to Begin an Essay:

1. Start with a direct statement of the issue, problem, etc. (good for technical reports, letters of application, etc.)

Topic: The influence of advertising

Advertising influences our lives by bombarding us with words and images everywhere we look, appealing to us as consumers to buy, buy, buy! From the sides of buses, from billboards, from our radios and televisions, we are constantly being sold on the idea that the best way to achieve the American dream is to consume more and more products, to buy more and more things.

2. Start with a personal anecdote (a case history for example) that dramatizes the issue at hand.

Topic: Reasons people have pets

When my husband is on the road, as he frequently is, my cat Sam keeps me company. He snuggles with me at night just when the bed seems too big. He pounces on my pillow when it's time to get up. He walks with me on a morning stroll before I leave for work, and he greets me at the door when I come home to an otherwise quiet house. If it were not for Sam, I would feel very lonely. I think many people are like me and have pets for companionship.

3. Make a controversial or otherwise surprising remark.

Topic: Growing home vegetable gardens

Vegetables can be bad for one's health. I once tried to grow my own vegetable garden, dutifully digging up the dirt, fertilizing it, and planting the tiny seeds. By the time I was finished, I was suffering from sunburn, heat exhaustion, a sore back, and I had stepped on my rake, puncturing my foot and requiring stitches. I thought gardening was supposed to be relaxing, but I discovered it to be a lot of hard work with questionable rewards.

4. Start with an appropriate quotation (see Bartlett's Quotations).

Topic: Growing home vegetable gardens

In *The Wasteland*, when T. S. Eliot wrote that "April is the cruelest month," he could have been speaking for many beginning gardeners. With the naive idea that a little vegetable garden would be just the thing to provide a little relaxation and some summer greens, many new gardeners soon find themselves sunburned, exhausted, and faced with tiny seedlings that just will not grow.

5. Start with statistics (this gives your paper an air of authority)

Topic: The influence of advertising

Studies show that the average American is bombarded with 1500 advertisement messages a day. Considering the pervasive presence of advertising in our daily lives, it would be difficult to deny the huge influence that advertising has on us.

6. Make reference to a current event in the schools, the community, the nation, etc., something of which you can be sure your reader is aware.

Topic: The portrayal of America in movies and/or television

As the 1996 presidential elections approach, one topic of debate continues to be the funding of the arts, especially in our troubled schools. Mr. Holland's Opus, a current movie, illustrates that continued education in the arts in America's schools is under attack, and that adequate education of our children is threatened.

7. Start with a definition (but not something trite like, "According to Webster's dictionary").

Topic: The influence of advertising

Advertising is the use of words and images to convince people to spend money they do not have on products and possessions they cannot afford and do not need. Parents should begin early to teach children to be discerning customers and skeptics of advertising claims.

8. Establish the importance of your subject

Topic: Art education in American schools

Most Americans agree that educating our children in reading, writing, and arithmetic is critical. However, controversy surrounds the issue of whether studying a broader array of disciplines is cost effective. While mastering the basics develops learning skills, studying electives such as art is essential to the balanced intellectual development of American youth. Including the study of art in our children's education will develop their creativity and their cultural awareness.

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS:

In a concluding paragraph, the writer rephrases the original thesis statement. A concluding paragraph is the writer's final opportunity to reassert and emphasize the essay's purpose. A good concluding paragraph (consisting of 5-7 sentences) ties all of the parts of an essay together, leaving the reader with a final thought or challenge.

Purpose of the Concluding Paragraph: *(one or more of the following, depending on the purpose of the essay: argumentative, descriptive, cause and effect, literary, etc.)*

- End the paper and give it a sense of finality
- Emphasize the main point of the paper (echoing the thesis)
- Give the results of a chain of reasoning developed throughout the body: "Therefore, because of these factors, there is only one conclusion we can reach..."
- Call for action in response to what is given in the body: "What, then, can we do about the Defense Department's waste and corruption? We, the taxpayers, can..."

How to End an Essay:

Conclusions are for shaping attitudes. Statements in a conclusion are general and do not convey details about the writer's topic. In a conclusion, the writer provides no new information. Instead, the thesis and main ideas are restated in different words, in order to create emphasis. As shown in the following portions of concluding paragraphs, the writer often uses synonyms of key terms and is careful *not* to repeat the thesis statement.

1. *Topic: The influence of advertising*

In response to a constant barrage of propaganda designed to increase materialism, we are turning into a nation of "shopping addicts." Many of us incur excessive debt in order to make purchases that we think we must have.

2. *Topic: Reasons people have pets*

Experts have verified the many beneficial effects of owning a pet. Given the positive influence of pets on their owners' emotional, as well as physical well-being, more people should take advantage of having a furry or feathered friend at home.

3. *Topic: Growing home vegetable gardens*

While many people consider gardening an enjoyable pastime, I have come to find it physically and emotionally draining. My foray into horticulture has reinforced my love of the great indoors. In the future, I will be contented with leisurely picking fresh vegetables within the confines and comfort of an air-conditioned supermarket.