



Essay Introductions

WEEK 4

LESSON 1-2



Lesson objectives

ANALYSING INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPHS

LEARNING THE STRUCTURE OF A COHERENT
ESSAY INTRODUCTION

Introductions

What information should an essay introduction include?

What are the elements of an effective introduction?

How should introductions be organized?



TASK 4 Identifying features in an introduction

1 Think about the introduction to an academic text such as an essay or article. Decide whether **a-i** are essential (E) or optional (O).

- a** gain the reader's interest by offering an opening statement, or 'hook'
- b** give background and context by moving from the general to the particular
- c** provide a rationale for researching and writing the text
- d** define any core terms necessary to the understanding of the text
- e** present evidence and citations to support your argument
- f** state limitations, e.g. to previous research, to the current text
- g** state the overall purpose and aims of the text
- h** state how the whole text is organized
- i** indicate the conclusion of the text

By the end of the introduction the audience of the text should be clear about the topic, focus, and aims of the text, the reason for writing it, and have an idea about how the text is organized.

Optional: a, d, e, f, i

Essay introductions

An essay introduction offers the reader an overview of the whole essay. It usually includes the following: a **statement** or 'hook' to gain the reader's interest; **contextualizing material** providing relevant background information; the **topic** and **focus** of the essay; the **rationale**, or reason, for writing the essay; an indication of the essay's **organization**. It may also be necessary to define any central concepts. The introduction moves from general to specific information. By the end, the reader should be clear about what the essay is going to focus on, why, and how. This specific information is typically expressed in the **thesis statement**.

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For the purposes of this assignment your introduction should contain all of the following:

1. **A hook (optional)** – something to get the audience's attention (a story, a quote, or an interesting fact.
2. **Background and context information** about your topic (define the terms in this part).
3. **A rationale** –reasoning behind why this topic is being discussed.
4. **The thesis statement**-what the essay is going to focus on (name the problems and solutions), why and how (name the perspectives).
5. **An outline** – the structure and organization of the paper

TITLE: *'The world order is changing rapidly as powerful countries become less powerful and other countries emerge.'* To what extent do you agree with this statement?

¹'The times they are a-changin'. So sang Bob Dylan in the early 1960s, and what may have been true then certainly seems true today. ²The two most powerful countries in the half-century following World War II were the USA and the Soviet Union. Other powerful countries included old colonial powers such as the UK and France. More recently, and particularly since the new millennium, international attention has focused on quite different countries, including the emerging economies of China and India. ³The term 'emerging economies' illustrates that power is not simply political but also economic. ⁴It is important to investigate the idea that some countries are becoming less powerful, and others are becoming more powerful, because international organizations like the United Nations need to respond to changing needs. ⁵This essay examines firstly what makes a country powerful, then focuses on the position of the USA and emerging countries including the 'BRIC' countries in the world today, and finally assesses the extent to which certain countries are becoming less powerful and the world order is changing.

Read the introduction and identify

- a. Rationale**
- b. The thesis statement**
- c. Contextualizing material**
- d. Hook**
- e. Basic definition**

Answers:

A-4

B-5

C-2

D-1

E-3

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Essay focus

WHAT MAKES A COUNTRY POWERFUL AND THE POSITION OF THE USA AND EMERGING COUNTRIES

Purpose of the essay

TO ASSESS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE WORLD ORDER IS CHANGING

Language which shows the organization of the essay

FIRSTLY, THEN, FINALLY

Look at the five points below and select the three main points that are most likely to be included in the essay. Suggest the order in which they are likely to occur.

- 1** a discussion of how the relative power of countries such as the USA, China, and India is changing
- 2** an examination of the concept of 'power'
- 3** a discussion of how the most powerful countries maintained their power after World War II
- 4** a clear decision regarding whether the power of different countries is actually changing
- 5** a description of the most powerful organizations in the world today, such as the United Nations

3 This task requires students to predict what is likely to be covered by the essay, based on what they read in the introduction. Point out that this is a useful skill and should encourage students to be clear about what they plan to include in their own introductions.

Sample answers

1, 2, and 4 are likely to be included. Order in which they are likely to occur (based on the thesis statement in the introduction in Task 1.1): 2, 1, 4.

1 is likely to be the main focus of the essay.

2 is unlikely to take place in any detail as it is not the main focus of the essay. However, *power* might be defined / illustrated early on in the essay.

3 is not directly relevant to the title and is unlikely to be included - it is simply part of the background information contained in the introduction.

4 needs to be included as it is the central point of the essay question. It is likely to come towards the end of the essay (inductive style) or, alternatively, stated at the beginning (deductive style).

1 Read the essay title and introduction below. Identify four of the features from Task 1.1.

TITLE: *'It is no longer relevant to classify countries into 'rich' and 'poor', or 'developed' and 'developing'.* Discuss.

Since the nineteenth century, or even earlier, people have referred to countries as 'rich' or 'poor'. These terms may have changed; for example instead of 'rich' the countries may be referred to as 'wealthy' or 'developed', while 'poor' countries may be called 'developing' or 'emerging' countries. This way of classifying countries is based on the idea that an entire country is essentially 'rich' or 'poor', and does not take into account the possibility that there may be significant differences in wealth within that country, or that the country might not remain rich permanently. This idea can be illustrated by the situation of former colonial powers, for example the UK, which has seen a gradual decline in its wealth while it has been overtaken by formerly poorer countries. Furthermore, within this country and many others there is a large gap between rich and poor. If there are benefits in being rich, they therefore do not apply to all the citizens of such countries.

2 A thesis statement is often the last sentence in an introduction. Select the best thesis statement (1-3) to complete the introduction above.

1 This essay will discuss the main issues related to the classification of 'rich' and 'poor', especially in consideration of the advantages and disadvantages, together with examples to offer an overview of the issue.

2 Using examples of countries throughout the world and with reference to economic, social, and psychological indicators, I argue that the division of countries into 'rich' and 'poor' may need re-examining.

3 First, the idea of what makes a country 'rich' or 'poor' countries will be examined, second the question of whether it is still relevant to classify countries in this way will be discussed, then a conclusion will be offered to sum up the main ideas.

Find: hook, definition, background/context info, rationale (reason for writing)

Sentence 1: a statement to gain the reader's interest;
sentence 2: a basic definition; sentences 3-5:
contextualizing background information; sentence 6:
rationale

Thesis statement 2 is the best. It follows on logically from the material in the introduction and is clear about its purpose. Also, it adds some interesting new information which expresses the writer's (the student's) argument.

Thesis statement 1 is empty and adds nothing new - instead it reprocesses the essay title. It is not clear but vague: there is no point mentioning *issues* if there is no indication of what these might be, e.g. economic difficulties.

Thesis statement 3 appears to enumerate the three main points of the essay, but the first of these is not very relevant to the question; the second simply rephrases the title; the third is redundant because it states the obvious - we would expect all essays to have a conclusion.

Evaluate the intro

Weak

Since the beginning of time, people have always suffered from addictions. Nowadays, however, times have changed, and people are starting to suffer from internet addiction more than any other kind of addiction. Internet addiction is characterized by excessive internet use and the inability to control the urge to use your computer and mobile phones. It is a pressing issue that needs to be solved as soon as possible.

Very broad opener.
Outside the scope of the essay.

Vague transition + Cliché
= Poor writing

Finally introduces the topic, defines the term, but says nothing concrete about it.

Gives a possible framework for the essay, but no details.

Weak: C+

Since the beginning of time, people have always struggled with various addictions. However, times have changed, and people are now struggling with internet addiction and any other kind of digital addiction. Internet addiction is characterized by excessive internet use and the inability to control the urge to use the computer and mobile phone. This is a pressing issue that needs to be solved as soon as possible.



**NO CLEAR FOCUS,
NO CLEAR ARGUABLE
CLAIM,
NO CLEAR ROAD MAP**

road opener.
the scope of the

on + Cliché

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ut it.

ves a possible
framework for the essay,
but no details.

Better: B-/B

1. Over the course of the last two decades, the Internet has revolutionized the way people communicate, share and receive information. 2. Consequently, more and more people are becoming addicted to the Internet. 3. This tendency might lead to dire consequences. 4. This essay will examine the problem of internet addiction from different perspectives and offer solutions to the problem



This time, the essay opener is more focused.



2-3. Introduces topic but says nothing concrete about it.



4. Descriptive road map, but no arguable claim. Lacking the content and details of the main argument.



Wastes time describing what you WILL do instead of just DOING it.

Evaluate the intro

Weak: C-/C

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**SOMEWHAT CLEAR FOCUS,
NO CLEAR ARGUABLE CLAIM,
CLEAR ROAD MAP**

This time, the essay
opener is more focused.

2-3. Introduces topic but
says nothing concrete
about it.

4. Descriptive road map,
but no arguable claim.
Lacking the content and
details of the main
argument.

Wastes time describing
what you WILL do
instead of just DOING it.



Group work

Evaluating student essay introductions

FOR INSTRUCTORS: DIVIDE STUDENTS INTO THREE GROUPS AND GIVE THEM 3 DIFFERENT INTRODUCTIONS. EACH GROUP SHOULD SPEND NO MORE THAN 15 MINUTES TO EVALUATE THE GIVEN INTRODUCTION. CALL ON GROUPS RANDOMLY AND ASK THAT STUDENTS SHARE THEIR EVALUATIONS BY HIGHLIGHTING THE INTRODUCTION PARTS ON SCREEN.

Evaluating essay introductions

1. People started to recognize that most of the troubles they face are happening because of not being aware of the consequences of waste they throw away, and now when it threatens mankind's survival, it has become an urgent problem. 2. It is possible to say that people live in the world of waste because the accumulated waste in landfills takes 70% of the overall refuse (Skenderovic et al., 2012). 3. This essay will examine the problem of solid waste pollution from environmental and social perspectives and explain the basic steps that can be done by factories to decrease the amount of waste like recycling, reusing and some biotechnologies; and argues that the change in people's attitude towards the waste they make to be the best solution to keep the planet from pollution.

1. **Does the essay contain essential features of an introduction?**
2. **Are the aims and rationale of the essay clearly given?**
3. **Does it contain appropriate academic language?**
4. **Does the thesis statement contain an arguable claim?**

For instructors

Possible student comments might be:

Sentence 1: hook; sentence 2: contextualizing information; sentence 4: roadmap and thesis statement

The rationale is not explicitly stated. The essay contains appropriate academic language. However, there are some sentences that seem “heavy”. The thesis statement has an arguable claim and clear purpose.

Evaluating essay introductions

1. The rapid advancement of technologies allowed humans to step into a new era of robotics and automation. 2. Climax of the modern computer science is the Artificial Intelligence, which is scientists' attempt to describe the human brain as a mathematical system. 3. The term Artificial Intelligence could be defined as 'the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings' (Britannica n.d.). 4. Since machines learned to perform tasks beyond human competence, they begin to shift people from workplaces, leading to resonance in the labor market. 5. This essay aims to examine the replacement of employers with an expert system from an economic and ethical perspective, considering two-issue tackling ways, which are then evaluated.

1. Does the essay contain essential features of an introduction?
2. Are the aims and rationale of the essay clearly given?
3. Does it contain appropriate academic language?
4. Does the thesis statement contain an arguable claim?

For instructors:

Possible student comments might be:

Sentence 1,2,3: contextualizing information; Sentence 3: definition; Sentence 4: implicit rationale; Sentence 5: roadmap + thesis statement

In the thesis statement, it might be better to state the solutions and evaluation instead of offering a descriptive roadmap.

Evaluating essay introductions

1. When we go grocery shopping, we usually find ourselves picking some vegetables, fruits, and grains, not even having a thought about how they were produced. 2. In the history of agriculture, it was necessary to protect crops from damages and diseases ever since the first cultivation. 3. Thus, to maintain food security and high production, the so-called “pesticides” were in the active use. 4. According to World Health Organization (WHO), pesticides are chemical compounds that kill or repel pests (any unwanted insects, plants, and fungi) by protecting farm crops and preventing some viruses from spreading. 5. From the very first use of synthetic pesticides that was started in 1940s (WHO, 2008), overall consumption has increased worldwide. 6. Up today it is known that pesticides can add up to the environment and build up in the food chain. 7. For that reason, the use of pesticides poses some significant issues both on humans and other living species, as well as on the entire ecosystem. 8. However, there are several possible solutions to tackle these problems as they will be stated later in this essay.

- 1. Does the essay contain essential features of an introduction?**
- 2. Are the aims and rationale of the essay clearly given?**
- 3. Does it contain appropriate academic language?**
- 4. Does the thesis statement contain an arguable claim?**

For instructors

Possible student comments might be:

Sentences 1: hook; sentences 2,3,4-contextualizing info.; sentence 4-brief definition; sentences 6-7 problem statement;

The author did not offer a clear roadmap. Instead of saying “there are several solutions,”; the solutions described in the essay can be briefly mentioned.

It’s not clear whether the following sentence is one of the main arguments of the essay: “Up today it is known that pesticides can add up to the environment and build up in the food chain.” To make it clear, we can add “The essay analyzes how pesticides can add up to the environment.....”

The essay uses appropriate academic language; however, hedging can make the statements less intense.



Thank you!

Next, we will learn how to write thesis statements.