Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Paragraphs**

Great writers know that effective essays begin with an interesting and engaging introduction that reveals their thesis and purpose, while capturing the reader’s attention.

**Introductions help writers…**

* Capture the reader’s attention and have them WANT to keep reading
* Guide readers to important ideas in the body of the essay
* Provide relevant background information to help readers understand the essay’s purpose and thesis.
* Present a thesis statement/claim (what you’re trying to prove)

**What does an introductory paragraph look like and how long should it approximately be?**

A well-developed introduction paragraph should be *at least 6-8 sentences* in length and include the following components:

• hook (3-4 sentences)

• general background information/transition leading to the thesis (2-3 sentences)

• thesis (1 sentence)

**Purpose and the Introduction**

Before writing your introduction, it is important to determine whether your essay calls for a formal introduction. For example, in narrative writing, it is often acceptable to start with the first event in your story, instead of providing background information. But, when writing informative pieces, persuasive essays, a literary analysis, or a research simulation task, it is important to provide an introductory paragraph that prepares the reader for what lies ahead. Any introduction, though, must clearly relate to the rest of the essay.

**The Thesis Statement**

In high school and college, many teachers and professors will require that an introductory paragraph include a thesis statement/claim, or a sentence (or sentences) that reveal the essay’s central idea. Including a thesis statement at the end of your introduction will help you practice clear essay organization.

**Strategies for Writing Introductions**

An introduction should always include an introductory device that leads into the thesis and engages the reader’s interest in the topic. The following examples are all excellent ways to gain your reader’s interest in your topic.

**1. Describe a scene**: Vividly describe a scene with sensory details (sight, sound, smell, etc.). Create a vivid image like a quick snapshot of people, places or things relevant to your topic.

**2. Tell an anecdote (short story, sometimes personal):** Tell a brief story or anecdote, like a 3-4 sentence news clip or a short personal experience. Don’t get bogged down in too many details at the risk of losing your reader’s attention.

**3. Use a quotation:** Locate a quote from an expert in the field you are discussing. Find a relevant proverb or quote from a literary source such as Shakespeare or even from a popular advertisement.

**4. Rhetorical question(s):** Ask 1-2 thought-provoking questions of your reader that relate to your thesis. Make sure the questions are not easily answered by a yes or no.

**5. State facts or statistics:** Give facts or statistics that might seem unusual or dramatic to your reader. Or give graphic examples that cause an emotional response (pathos) about your topic.

**6. Broad statement narrowing to a limited subject:** Keep your topic sentence broad and slowly work your way down the paragraph by getting more and more specific until you eventually state your thesis.

**7. Define an important term or concept:** Define some important concept of your topic or a significant word related to your topic. Explain what the word really means or how the term is misunderstood.

**8. Compare/Contrast:** Compare or contrast your topic to something your reader would be familiar with. Perhaps use a metaphor to make the comparison which supports your thesis.

**9. Reversal:** Begin by pretending to support the opposite side of your thesis, perhaps even exaggerating the position. Then use a transition to return to the actual position of your thesis.

**10. Combination:** Focus on one introductory method to get started, and add other strategies that seem to work well together to present your topic. This is a little more advanced skill.

**What NOT to do in an introductory paragraph:**

**Don’t apologize:** Never suggest that you don’t know what you’re talking about or that you’re not enough of an expert on this subject

**Avoid statements like this:**

* “In my opinion…”
* “I’m not sure about this, but…”
* “I do not have much background in this subject, but…”

**Don’t announce your intentions:** Don’t just come out and tell the reader what you’re planning to do. Get to the point gradually, over time.

**Avoid statements like this:**

* “In this paper I will…”
* “The purpose of this essay is to…”