

Introductions and Conclusions

Introduction and conclusion paragraphs have important roles in academic papers. Introduction paragraphs are the first paragraph of the paper, and they prepare the audience for the organization and the main topic or argument of the paper. The conclusion paragraph, however, is the last paragraph of the paper, and it will sum up the main points as well as explain why the topic is important or what further exploration is needed of the topic. This handout will discuss the elements and structure of introduction and conclusion paragraphs in academic essays.

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Introductions

An introduction paragraph typically consists of a hook, the context or background of the paper's topic, an introduction of the main points, and a thesis statement. A well-written introduction starts the paragraph with broader concepts and slowly narrows the content towards the final sentence, which is the thesis statement.

- **Hook:** A hook is an attention-grabbing statement at the beginning of an introduction. The hook's purpose is to encourage the audience to continue reading the text. Some examples of hooks include mentioning surprising statistics related to the topic or providing a brief story about an interesting or thought-provoking event that emotionally connect with readers.
- **Context/Background:** An introduction paragraph also provides basic context for the assignment's topic. The type of information needed will depend on the assignment's topic.
- **Introduction of Main Points:** The main points of the paper are introduced to the audience in the order that they will appear in the body paragraphs. This can be done with individual sentences located between the context/background and the thesis statement, or the main points can be listed in the thesis statement.

- **Thesis:** The thesis statement is a debatable claim about the topic, and it is the main idea of the paper. The thesis is a focused sentence, illustrating the writer’s point-of-view. Here are some examples of a thesis:
 - *As light pollution becomes more prevalent in suburban landscapes, local governments need to manage the growing population of small communities by finding more efficient processes to shield the night sky.*
 - *Using contradicting tones, eccentric characters, and an abstract theme, Lewis Carroll illustrates a world that cannot agree on moral ethics and calls readers to analyze their own conflicted selves.*

Conclusions

A conclusion’s purpose is to combine multiple thoughts from the body paragraphs and explain why the points are important. Conclusions generally follow the pattern below:

- **Reword the Thesis:** The first sentence of a conclusion should restate the debatable claim made in the introduction. This sentence will not repeat verbatim the thesis of the paper, but instead, will remind the reader of the paper’s main argument or purpose.
- **Synthesize and Summarize the Body Paragraphs:** The next portion of the conclusion should synthesize and summarize the major points of the paper. The conclusion needs to explain how all the major points in the paper are connected.
- **Answer ‘So What?’/ ‘Now What?’:** The final few sentences of the essay should tell the audience why the writer’s point-of-view matters, or it should provide a call-to-action that informs readers of what they should do next. Here are some examples of questions to ask when creating the final sentences of a paper:
 - **Why does the topic of the paper matter?**
 - **Why should readers take the thesis seriously?**
 - **What is important about the topic?**
 - **What actions should the readers take?**
 - **What type of additional research or experimentation is needed to improve results?**

Additional Resources

For further help writing introduction or conclusion paragraphs, visit the Academic Center for Excellence’s walk-in Writing Center, schedule an appointment with a tutor, or visit our website at

www.germannna.edu/academic-center-for-excellence/. You can also read the following handouts:

“[Guide to Writing an Essay](#),” “[Creating a Thesis Statement](#),” and “[Self-Editing Checklist for College Writers](#).”

Introduction Example:

Love’s Funeral: A Comparison of “Annabel Lee” and “Ulalume”

The critical acclaim of films directed by Tim Burton, such as *Nightmare before Christmas* and *Edward Scissorhands*, hints to modern culture’s fascination with dark romances.

Although these stories are more recent, interest in this cult genre has been a trend well before these cinematic tales. Proficient in horror literature, Edgar Allan Poe was a talented storyteller of darkness and passion. In Poe’s poem “Annabel Lee,” the speaker shares the memory of his relationship, beginning with a romance but concluding as a dark ballad of death. In another poem, “Ulalume,” the speaker travels with his soul, Psyche, through the night and finds himself standing near the grave of his lost love. In both works, Poe creates imagery with nature. The

night sky, sea, and time are elements continuously mentioned, reminding the narrator of his inability to control his journey through love. Weaving in multiple characters, such as the celestial beings and Psyche, Poe hints that the deepest grief of the narrator may be rooted in man’s fear of being alone. With these two works, Poe utilizes the uncontrollable aspects of nature and the company of higher powers to describe the dark undertones of love and death, showing the traits they share in common: powerlessness and loss.

The first sentence of this introduction contains a hook. This is used to grab the reader’s attention.

The title of a paper should reflect the main argument/ point of the paper.

List points before the thesis in separate sentences. This will make the thesis more concise and allow the writer to discuss the details of each point in the following paragraphs

Important context/ background information on the paper’s topic provides the audience with essential material they will need to know.

This thesis articulates the main idea of the paper while making an arguable statement about the topic.

Conclusion Example:

Grasping for an audience to understand the similarity of love and death, Poe tells “Annabel Lee” and “Ulalume” through the voices of powerless narrators as they battle with nature and different characters. Creating a murderous picture of nature, Poe hints at the helplessness people face during a relationship and the loss that follows. The multiple characters and their hidden meanings represent the speaker’s search for company and meaning in his loneliness. Shared as a story, Poe’s gentle words soften readers to continue reading and empathize with the young couple. Using multiple dialogues and a restless portrayal of nature, Poe shows two lovers against the world and loneliness. While modern culture may read “Annabel Lee” and “Ulalume” merely as a tragic romance, each line further demonstrates that death’s blow can be communicated more vividly through the use of beautiful language and a morbid story.

To summarize the topics covered in previous paragraph, use separate sentences to review each main point of the paper.

The first sentence of the conclusion closely resembles the introduction’s thesis.

The ‘So What?’ portion of a conclusion gives the paper a purpose and states why the thesis is relevant to readers.