

Introductions

Students often make the mistake of sailing straight into answering the essay question in the first paragraph without following the convention of beginning with an introduction. Basic introduction paragraphs have a special function.

- What do you think is the purpose of an introduction?
- What effect should a good introduction have on the reader?

Read the following question and the sample introduction paragraph. The sentences are in the wrong order for an introduction paragraph. Match the statements to the correct sentence type.

Some students who enrol in university studies have difficulties with their writing skills. Discuss the reasons for this problem and critically assess the effectiveness of university intervention writing programs.

1. **Because poor writing skills can affect students' success in tertiary education, it is important that writing problems are understood so that university assistance programs are adequate.**
 - Background statement
 - Thesis statement
 - Outline statement

2. **This essay will identify and examine the main causes underpinning student difficulties with academic writing and consider evidence to evaluate whether programs delivered in universities address this problem.**
 - Background statement
 - Thesis statement
 - Outline statement

3. **Assignment essays are frequently used as assessment tasks to involve students in research, academic reading and formal essay writing.**
 - Background statement
 - Thesis statement
 - Outline statement

Here are some more possible things to include in your introduction. Organise them into the correct order.

- a) What is the explicit purpose of your paper?
 - b) (Mention of some previous research in the area)
 - c) Discussion on general topic of paper
 - d) Outline of the sections of your paper and what they contain
 - e) Narrowing discussion to more specific focus of thesis
 - f) (Indication where there is a problem, limitation, or gap in the area which justifies further research)
 - g) Indication of why research in this area is important/useful/relevant
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- How do you know what sections to include in your introduction?
 - Is this a good introduction? Why? Why not? What may be missing?

Here at the institute for computer research, me and my colleagues have created the SUPERGP system and have applied it to several toy problems. We had previously fumbled with earlier versions of SUPERGPSYSTEM for a while. This system allows the programmer to easily try lots of parameters, and problems, but incorporates a special constraint system for parameter settings and LISP S-expression parenthesis counting. The search space of GP is large and many things we are thinking about putting into the supergpsystem will make this space much more colorful.

Conclusions

Often students feel tired from the effort of researching and writing an essay and toss in a few rushed words to finish up. But the conclusion is the last paragraph your reader will see of your writing effort. So, it is worth putting in the last dregs of your intellectual energy to come up with a convincing conclusion. Fortunately, conclusions have a pattern (recipe) you can follow so that you can write a convincing conclusion.

- What makes a good conclusion?
- What effect should a good conclusion have on its readers?

Read the following question and the sample conclusion paragraph. The sentences are in the wrong order for a conclusion paragraph. Match the statements to the correct sentence type.

Some students who enrol in university studies have difficulties with their writing skills. Discuss the reasons for this problem and critically assess the effectiveness of university intervention writing programs.

1. The main causes of student difficulty appear to be that secondary school assessment has a different focus from university expectations and that universities are increasingly attracting mature age students who may require an update on their skills. In response, universities invest considerable capital into well-run programs that effectively assist students to overcome their writing problems.
 - Restatement of main premise
 - Summary of key points in the essay
 - Broad statement (evaluate, forecast future, make recommendations)
2. To conclude, university students who are experiencing difficulty with their academic writing skills will require assistance to reach their academic potential.
 - Restatement of main premise
 - Summary of key points in the essay
 - Broad statement (evaluate, forecast future, make recommendations)
3. All students deserve to be successful in their studies and responsible universities must respond to student needs so that they graduate well-educated students of the highest standard, now and in the future.
 - Restatement of main premise
 - Summary of key points in the essay
 - Broad statement (evaluate, forecast future, make recommendations)

Here are some possible things to include in your conclusion. Say which of them you must, may or should not include in a good conclusion.

- a) Acknowledgement of limitations.
- b) New ideas not mentioned in the body of the paper.
- c) A reminder of the purpose of the paper.
- d) Important considerations or limitations not mentioned earlier
- e) Predictions based on research done.
- f) Information that conflicts with that stated in introduction.
- g) Brief summary of main findings.
- h) Recommendations for change.
- i) The main implication/s of those findings.
- j) Suggestions for future research.

Suggestions for effective conclusions

- Keep it short.
- Summarize your argument concisely, with an emphasis on deductions made and their implications.
- Avoid going into detail; details should come earlier in the paper.
- Step quickly back from the specific and look at broader issues. This is the place to indicate relevance in the field.
- Don't hide or ignore difficulties or limitations. Addressing problems or drawbacks are a way of qualifying your conclusions to be realistic and also to possibly identify future areas for research.
- Ensure that your introduction agrees with your conclusion.

Redundancies

Before your work is complete it must be edited to remove every unnecessary word. Good writing must contain no redundancies. Where are the redundancies in these sentences?

- a) After discussing the results, this paper will return back briefly to look again at the method.
- b) These policies will lead to a far greater number of foreign imports.