

FIVE STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

STEP 1

The first step to writing the perfect research paper introduction is doing the research. Seek out official journals in the field you'll be covering, and pick the best articles or books that closely discuss your specific topic and answer your question. Avoid generic or independent websites. URLs ending in .org, .gov or .edu are good options. Wikipedia is not a good source for a research paper. Visit our school or local library and use their online databases, such as SIRS, Ebsco or ProQuest.

Step 2

Write the thesis of the paper. This only needs to be one or two detailed sentence(s), a summary of what you intend to discuss in your research paper. In the thesis, you should list at least three, but no more than five, different themes that supporting your thesis. For example if I were talking about global warming and its effects on the polar ice caps, I would talk about, not only what is physically happening there, but also the animals it has effected and how they are coping with the environmental changes. I would also discuss the repercussions long term on the ice caps, what will happen if global warming continues and what we can do to reduce the effects of global warming. Make sure that you use a clear, active voice. The body of the research paper will stem from this sentence. Sum up your research in less than 100 words. Any longer, and you run the risk of losing the reader's attention. A nice average length is 55 words, but don't stumble on counting words. That's secondary to content.

Step 3

Write an outline for the paper, based on your thesis. The outline does not need to be detailed -- just a sketch of the path you will take to make your point. This will help you organize your sources and flesh out the introductory paragraph.

Step 4

The first sentence of the introductory paragraph should do two things: introduce the topic and get the reader to want to read on(the hook.) Do not use the thesis as the first sentence, though. With a few key words, generalize the theme in relation to the audience or the subject, whichever suits the topic. In a biology paper, you may reflect on the effect a certain species has on its environment. In a literature paper, you can note how an author's choices affected his life, or state the author's significance to the literary world. Here's an example: Theme: "*Art therapy offers cancer patients the opportunity to learn to relax and trust their doctor and their medical treatments; to express their fears and anxieties, helping them cope with their disease; to regain self-confidence; and to hopefully experience positive results, such as enhanced energy or lessened pain.*" (The theme has four obvious components. The body of the research paper would be structured accordingly.)Intro: "*The direct relationship between the mind and the body's ability to heal may never be fully understood, but further studies in art therapy with cancer patients prove that indulging in creative activities like painting or sculpting often decreases pain and increases positive progression through the disease.*"(The first line refers to the theme, but does not go into specifics. It reflects on the impact of art therapy on cancer patients as a whole.)

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Step 5

Where you put the theme in the intro paragraph depends on the rest of your introduction. Every research paper is unique. The theme often works well as the last line of the introduction. But it can also fall anywhere in between the first and last sentence. The two key sentences are the intro and the theme. Once you have those two, the rest of the sentences (at least three) should further clarify your position and introduce the theme and what you intend to address with your research.