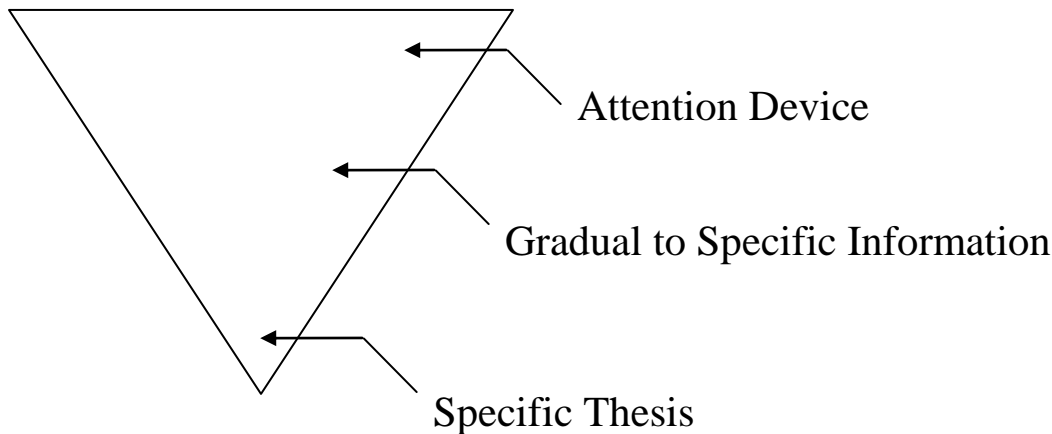


Academic Introductions and Conclusions

Elements of an Introduction



Regular Introductions

Purpose: Ease reader into paper

Attention Device: Hook and lead needed

Type of Essay: Narrative or informal assignments

Thesis: General but relevant to essay

Academic Introduction

Purpose: Inform reader of topic

Attention Device: Tell specifics of paper

Type of Essay: Analytical essays or formal assignments

Thesis: Specific description of argument

When do I use an Academic Introduction?

Use this type of introduction when writing for essays intended to analyze your topic thoroughly.

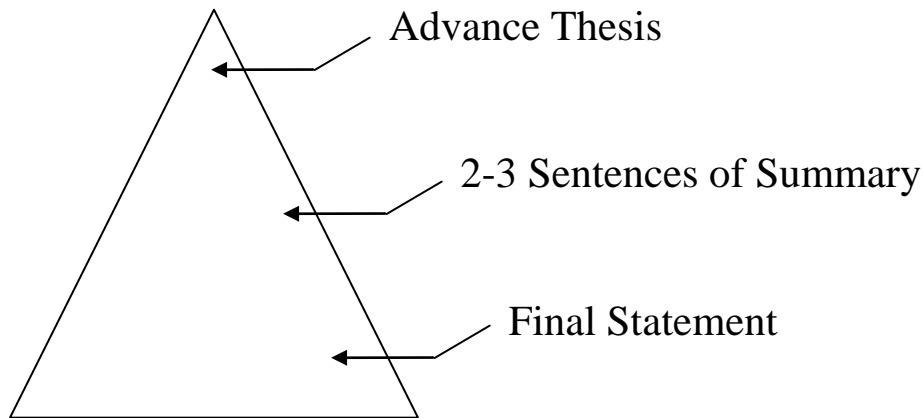
These papers can range from reader response essays, explication assignments, comparison papers, and research projects. Whenever your audience consists of someone academic (i.e. your professor or classmates), use this format.



Example Academic Introduction

In 1988, Leslie Marmon Silko wrote Ceremony. The novel chronicles the experiences of Tayo, a young Native American, after he returns from World War II. Throughout the novel, the author employs side stories and colorful symbols to characterize different events in the story, and she repeatedly mentions blue and yellow pollen. When readers examine the significance of these colors, they see the author's use of color to illustrate the healing aspects of the Native American ceremonies and attitudes. In Ceremony, Silko uses yellow and blue to show spiritual restoration, physical health, and mental clarity.

Elements of a Conclusion



Regular Conclusions

Purpose: Signal to reader that paper will end

Repetition: Summarize main points

Type of Essay: Informal projects Ex. summaries

Final Sentence: General statement

Academic Conclusions

Purpose: Tie argument together for reader

Repetition: Summarize with essay purpose in mind

Type of Essay: Formal essays Ex. research papers

Final Sentence: Leave reader with an idea to ponder

When do I use Academic Conclusions?

Use this type of conclusion for formal or academic assignments. It serves to complete the ideas established by your thesis. In formal projects, the conclusion should be where you tie everything together. By advancing your thesis, in the first sentence of the concluding paragraph, you signal to your reader that a culmination of your ideas will take place, and as you continue writing, repeat only your most relevant ideas to show your reader the attainment of your argument. The concluding sentence needs to leave your reader with a lasting impression of your paper, and when writing argumentative essays, the sentence needs make your reader remember your essay later.



Example Academic Conclusion

Due to her use of blue and yellow, Silko illustrates the main characters reemergence from a sick and wounded veteran to a man able to appreciate life. After depicting the healing powers of blue and yellow pollen, the author shows the absences of these colors in Tayo's life when he returns from the war, and as she describes his encounters with the Native American ceremonies, she demonstrates the power of the colors through their impact on Tayo's actions. After Silko reveals the character's change to readers, they see the hero associating himself with the colors and their meaning. Because of the author's depictions of healing, Ceremony encourages readers to assess the world around them and experience the journey of Tayo.

Script for Academic Introductions and Conclusions

Elements of an Introduction

When starting a paper, most writers choose a style of opening with which they feel comfortable. When writing informal papers, writers may begin an essay with a quote, an anecdote, an illustration, a definition, a comparison of ideas, a cause and effect relationship, a description of an event or a rhetorical question. These methods help to ease a reader into the topic a paper will discuss. Although writers produce quality introductions when using these types of beginnings, they frequently encounter problems when writing an academic introduction.

Academic introductions can frustrate writers because this style of rhetoric does not encourage most of the previously mentioned beginnings. When writing academic introductions, writers need to remain aware of their audience and quickly progress from their topic sentence to their thesis.

Regardless of which type of introduction you use, you will need three common elements: an attention device, a transition from general to specific information, and a concrete thesis. Unlike in a regular introduction, where the goal is to ease your reader into the paper, in an academic introduction, you need to work toward establishing a specific and clear purpose for your reader.

Although academic introductions possess the same aspects as standard introductions, the elements change when being used in formal writing. Instead of guiding a reader into a paper, writers of academic papers need to inform their audience of their topic at the beginning of the paper, and these papers do not have an attention device such as story or rhetorical question. When composing these introductions, writers quickly move into facts and the beginnings of their arguments. After defining the basics of their ideas, writers of academic introductions produce a specific and arguable thesis. This type of introduction serves to prepare your reader for the ideas you will support with research.

When do I use an Academic Introduction?

Use this method when a paper will not be read aloud. This is not a style for presentations or speeches. Academic introductions help your reader to understand the basics of a complex argument explained in writing. You will use this style in literature, history, and psychology courses. The purpose of this type of introduction is to get to the point quickly, so you can move into the depths of your paper and show what you have learned. If you are unsure of whether or not you need to use this format, ask yourself who composes your audience. If you answer with either your professor or classmates in an upper level class, you have a formal paper and a need for an academic introduction. If you are still unsure, ask yourself what kind of assignment you are developing. If you are spending hours researching or you are examining a text closely, you will need an academic introduction.

Example Academic Introduction

At the bottom of your handout, you will see an example of an academic introduction. It shows how important the writer needs to quickly establish his/her premise and move into his/her thesis.

Elements of a Conclusion

Like introductions, all conclusions possess common elements. In every conclusion, a writer advances his/her thesis, provides a two to three sentences of summary, and composes a final sentence to impact his/her audience.

In traditional conclusions, the restatement of the thesis signals the end of the paper for readers, and the conclusion recaps the paper's main points; the final statement consists of a general sentence ending the paper.

When do I use an academic conclusion?

Use this type of conclusion for formal assignments and when writing anything argumentative. This structure works well with research projects, textual examinations, comparison papers, and critiques. In academic conclusions, readers want to do more than merely end the paper. The conclusion acts as a culmination of ideas, and as such, the first statement advances the thesis of the paper and ties together the numerous ideas discussed throughout the body of the essay. The next two to three sentences do not simply repeat what the author has already said. Writers use this summary to complete their arguments and secure their arguments in the minds of their audiences. When writing formal essays, writers use the final sentence of the paper to make a last impression on readers and strive to leave their audience with something to ponder. Although the last sentence does need to finish the paper, the sentence should be powerful yet contemplative.

Example Academic Conclusion

On the bottom of this side of your handout is an example of an academic conclusion. Note the writer's use of the aspects of conclusions and summation of the author's ideas.

About Both

When writing, remember that there is not right and wrong to writing when you start out. If you create a less focused introduction in order to get something down on paper, and, then, go back and change it later, it is fine. A few writers write their introductions after they have written the entire paper. By writing the paper first, they know what ideas their essay will explore, and they feel they can create a more specific introduction as a result. Other writers create a general thesis, write their essays, and then create the first sentence of the conclusion. Because they are familiar with the papers now, they create a better advancement of their thesis than their original sentence, and during the revision process, these writers turn the idea into their thesis at the end of their introduction. Every writer has his/her own style, and with time, you will find that this type of introduction and conclusion comes naturally after writing enough papers.

If you have any questions about an introduction or conclusion, or if you become stuck, feel free to call and make an appointment with the Writing Center at 816-235-1146. We will be glad to assist you.