

Writing an Introduction

Ask these questions:

What is it?

An introduction is the first paragraph of a written research paper, or the first thing you say in an oral presentation, or the first thing people see, hear, or experience about your project.

It has two parts:

1. A general introduction to the topic you will be discussing
2. Your Thesis Statement

Why do it?

Without an introduction it is sometimes very difficult for your audience to figure out what you are trying to say. There needs to be a thread of an idea that they will follow through your paper or presentation. The introduction gives the reader the beginning of the piece of thread so they can follow it.

How do I do it?

Start with a couple of sentences that introduce your topic to your reader. You do not have to give too much detailed information; save that for the body of your paper. Make these sentences as interesting as you can. Through them, you can hook a reader and get them very interested in the line of thinking you are going to develop in your project.

Then state your thesis, which may be done in one or more sentences. The length of your introduction depends on the length and complexity of your project, but generally it should not exceed one page unless it is a very long project or a book. The average length of an introduction is one half a page.

Some Examples:

For the example, the regular text is the general introduction to the topic. The BOLD text is the writer's Thesis Statement.

Example 1

Teenagers in many American cities have been involved in more gangs in the last five years than ever before. These gangs of teens have been committing a lot of violent crimes. The victims of these crimes are both gang members and people outside of gangs. Many people do not want to travel to areas in our cities because of the danger from this problem. **For this terrible situation to stop, it is going to take a combined effort on the part of many people. Excellent, supervised after-school programs, more jobs available for teens, and healthy family relationships will go a long way towards ending this crisis in our society.**

Example 2

During the Middle Ages in Europe and the Middle East there was much armed conflict between Christians and Muslims. Christians called these conflicts the Crusades because they were fighting under the sign of the cross to save the holy lands of the Bible from being desecrated by non-Christians. **However, the true reason for fighting for these lands was less than holy. It was mainly a desire for economic gain that prompted the Christian leaders to send soldiers to fight in the Holy Land.**

An introduction gives the reader an idea of where you are going in your project so they can follow along. You can give them more background details and supporting evidence for your thesis in the body of the paper itself.