



Writing a Strong Introduction and Conclusion

This handout outlines the basics of **how to write a strong introduction and conclusion in a research paper**. Remember:

- By having a strong **introduction**, you will state your main argument, hook the reader, and make them interested in reading your paper further.
- By having a strong **conclusion**, you will leave the reader with a clear and concise account of what your paper was about, synthesize and evaluate your evidence, and have the reader leave with something new to think about.

Important Note: *This handout may serve as a general guide. Different disciplines, assignments, and instructors may have varying expectations. Always remember to review the directions of your assignment, consider the expectations of your discipline (is it a paper for Science? Psychology? English?), and consult with your professor if you have any questions.*

Introduction

The **introduction** is the first paragraph of your paper. It is exactly what the word “introduction” is. You will basically “introduce” what you will tell the reader.

Key Points:

- Introduction paragraphs are typically about four to five sentences but may vary in length depending on the assignment.
 - Some disciplines or longer papers may require introductions that are more than one paragraph.
- Introductions briefly state what you are going to write about and contain your thesis statement or central argument.

- You may begin with a “hook,” a question, a quote/statistic, or an anecdote (a short story), to capture your reader’s attention.

Introduction Examples

Needs Improvement:

“Some people can’t take 10,000 steps a day. It is good for your health. I try to take 10,000 steps a day even though my schedule is bad and doesn’t allow time for it. I like to walk and exercise. More people should. There should be better walking lanes with lines on the sidewalks so people don’t have to be afraid and this will make them walk more. Some people do not like to walk.”

Potential Areas of Concern

- First, this introduction jumps right into the topic without giving the reader any opening, context, or initial insight.
- Next, it is written very informally and includes the author’s personal experiences and opinions.
 - Remember to check the assignment and consider the discipline you are writing in before using first-person language and inserting any personal opinions. It may not be appropriate for some research papers.
- Lastly, it does not clearly define the paper’s thesis statement and instead introduces new ideas (walking lanes and people who do not like to walk) without relating them to a central argument.

Better:

“How many steps have you taken today? Did you know that according to an [article from Mount Sinai Hospital](#), sitting puts millions of people at increased risk for chronic disease? This paper will consider the importance of walking 10,000 steps per day and provide in-depth information on how and why it produces positive outcomes. The three main health benefits of this activity include an improved cardiovascular system, overall body fitness, and mental clarity.”

What has improved?

- First, this introduction starts out with a relevant question to immediately get the reader to think.
- Then, it provides a relevant statistic to further hook the reader and prompt them to continue reading.
- Finally, it clearly tells the reader what the paper is going to be about and provides the paper's central argument.

Note: *Some introductions may look different in length and style depending on the assignment's requirements and subject area.*

Example that needs improvement	Better example
• Jumps right in with no "introduction." • States personal activities and opinions without considering the discipline. • Goes off topic.	• Starts out with a hook and a statistic. • Introduces the topic of the paper. • Clearly states the main argument/thesis.

Conclusion

The **conclusion** is the last section of your paper. It is exactly what the word "conclusion" is. You will basically "conclude" your paper.

Key Points:

- Conclusion paragraphs are typically about four to five sentences. However, like introductions, they may vary in length depending on the assignment.
 - Some disciplines or longer papers may require conclusions that are more than one paragraph.
- A strong conclusion does not just restate the central argument; it explains its importance and synthesizes/evaluates information.
- Conclusions can also leave the reader with something to think about or consider.

Note: *Common ways of beginning conclusions include "In conclusion" or "In summary." These phrases may or may not be appropriate based on your assignment and discipline.*

Conclusion Examples

Needs Improvement:

“I hope more people walk. It is good for them. Maybe they will get the help that they need if they can’t walk or do steps. They won’t live long. Especially if they eat junk food too. Or drink or smoke. I don’t drink or smoke. But sometimes I do eat fast food during my studies. My grandparents lived a long time.”

Potential Areas of Concern

- First, this conclusion does not effectively address the paper’s central argument.
- Next, it does not properly discuss additional topics (drinking and smoking).
 - It may be appropriate to bring up new information in a conclusion, but it should be relevant to the central argument.
- Finally, it is written very informally and once again includes the author’s personal experiences and opinions.
 - Once again, remember to check the assignment and consider the discipline before using first-person language and inserting one’s personal opinions.

Better:

“In conclusion, regularly walking 10,000 steps a day has several benefits. Good heart health and overall body fitness can decrease the likelihood of cardiovascular issues, and walking frequently can improve one’s mental health. The evidence presented suggests that walking is one way to help increase one’s health overall. As more research emerges, it is important for people to remain knowledgeable about how to live a healthy lifestyle if they want to experience longevity.

What has improved?

- First, this conclusion immediately revisits the main argument.
- Next, it restates the main points and briefly summarizes their importance.
- Then it evaluates by using a claim relevant to the central argument (the benefits of walking increase overall health).
- Finally, it leaves the reader with something to think about.

Example that needs improvement	Better example
- Does not address the central argument effectively. - Goes off topic. - Talks about personal activities without considering discipline/directions.	- Calls back to the main argument. - Briefly summarizes the main points and evaluates information. - Leaves the reader with something to think about.

Practice

Introduction Practice: Pick a health topic that you feel strongly about, whether it be the benefits of stopping smoking, sleeping, or drinking more water. Write your introduction here.

Conclusion Practice: Write a conclusion for the topic you chose for your practice introduction.
