Introductions prepare the reader for the information in the essay. To do this, an introduction should do the following:

### Catch the reader’s attention
Introductions should pique a reader’s interest. They could appeal to the senses, invoke emotional appeal or even startle and amaze. An introduction should make a reader want to continue reading.

**Examples:**
1. “Do these teens need to be driving as early as we are allowing them to drive?” said Adrian Lund, president of the Highway Safety Association. *Notice how the quote encourages a reader to begin thinking about an issue? This can be a good way to engage readers and make them continue reading.*

2. When your son or daughter turns sixteen, don’t forget to wrap up the perfect birthday present: a Glock 8mm handgun. *This opening statement works because it creates a startling scenario: giving a gun as a gift to a teenager.*

### Clearly introduce the topic
An introduction must clearly introduce the topic. An introduction may include the topic’s importance, background information (such as statistics, commentary, history, etc.), or the writer’s angle.

- Questions to consider to help introduce the topic:
  - What do readers need to know?
  - What presumptions do people have?
  - How is the issue relevant to a reader?

**Examples:**
1. Unfortunately, some teenagers don’t realize that cars are more than just something to show off. Great responsibility comes with being behind the wheel; someone else’s life or even their own is at stake. *Notice in this example how the writer’s provides information on presumptions, importance, and relevance to readers.*

2. This may seem outrageous, but according to the Department of Public Safety, handing the keys of a brand new car to an inexperienced driver may be as dangerous and deadly as giving a teen a firearm. *Notice in this example how the writer provides some background information and the relevance of the topic to readers.*
Developing Introductions

Establish a thesis statement

In a typical academic essay, the introduction will include a thesis statement to guide the reader through the rest of the paper. The thesis statement will include the writer’s opinion on a topic and claims/points supporting the opinion.

- Basic Thesis Formula: Thesis = Subject + Opinion

Example:

Because of an increase in fatal car accidents involving sixteen-year-olds, lawmakers should increase the age for granting a driver’s license from 16 to 18. [Notice in this example that the subject and opinion are clearly established.]

Let’s see what happens when we combine all examples above into their respective paragraphs. Pay close attention to how, once combined, the sentences create a distinct introduction for readers.

Paragraph #1

“Do these teens need to be driving as early as we are allowing them to drive?” said Adrian Lund, president of the Highway Safety Association.

Unfortunately, some teenagers don’t realize that cars are more than just something to show off. Great responsibility comes with being behind the wheel; someone else’s life or even their own is at stake. Because of an increase in fatal car accidents involving sixteen-year-olds, lawmakers should increase the age for granting a driver’s license from 16 to 18.

Paragraph #2

When your son or daughter turns sixteen, don’t forget to wrap up the perfect birthday present: a Glock 8mm handgun. This may seem outrageous, but according to DPS, handing the keys of a brand new car to an inexperienced driver may be as dangerous and deadly as giving a teen a firearm. Because of an increase in fatal car accidents involving sixteen-year-olds, lawmakers should increase the age for granting a driver’s license from 16 to 18.
NOTE: Depending on the essay/assignment, an introduction will vary—which is why an introduction is one of the most complicated parts to write. Not all introductions will be as straightforward as the examples above; still, the examples and explanations can be used as a guide/model of how to formulate an introduction. Below are more tips on writing introductions and advice on things to avoid.

### Two tips for writing introductions

| Write the introduction last: Typically, writers don’t figure out their argument or purpose until after they begin writing. In fact, many will begin with a certain idea but as he/she writes, the idea will evolve or change all together. When this occurs, an introduction may no longer fit the content of the essay. Sometimes it may be easier to focus on the content (body paragraphs) first before writing the introduction. This will ensure that the introduction fits the content. | Use a Hook: With a hook—also called an attention grabber—a writer can catch a reader’s attention, easily. A hook can be 1) an intriguing quote, 2) a personal anecdote, 3) a shocking/unusual statement, 4) a probing question, 5) or a reference to current events. Examples: *A shocking/unusual statement:* Walt Whitman was undoubtedly a soothsayer, and his clairvoyant abilities become apparent in the preface to his *Leaves of Grass* where he states . . . .  
*A probing question:* Just how many Big Macs does it take to have a heart attack? With the increased consumption of fast foods, there may soon be an exact answer to that question. |

| Things to avoid when writing an introduction—a checklist |  |

| **Clichés, platitudes, and vague statements:** Clichés are overused and unoriginal expressions (black as coal, red as roses, cold as ice). Platitudes are statements presented as original thought but lack substance or appear too obvious (It could’ve been a lot worse; it was meant to be; everything happens for a reason). | **Ex:** Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is one of the greatest American novels; it has stood through the test of time.  
**Avoid:** “In this paper, I will discuss the vast effects of global warming;” “this paper will prove that global warming has many negative effects;” I chose this topic because global warming is a serious issue.”  
**Do:** The negative effects of global warming are vast and need serious discussion.  
| **Avoid announcing the paper’s topic.** In a typical academic essay, announcing the topic can signal to a reader that the writer lacked confidence. It is best to use direct statements. |  |
### Developing Introductions

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<th>Avoid announcing opinions. Announcing that something is an opinion is a sign that a writer isn’t confident in his/her argument. Additionally, when reading an argumentative or critical essay, it is understood that the content is the writer’s opinion.</th>
<th>Ex. “This is only my belief. . . ; While only my opinion. . .; Some will disagree, but this is what I feel . . .”</th>
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<td>Avoid beginning with a definition. Opening with a definition is overdone. Additionally, dictionaries vary and one dictionary may define something a bit different, which will lead to confusion.</td>
<td>Ex. The globalization of energy is significant. Now, according to the <em>American Heritage Dictionary</em>, globalization means “to make global or worldwide in scope or application.”</td>
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| Avoid sweeping statements or broad generalizations about a topic. Generalizations are frowned upon because they can signal to a reader that the writer didn’t do much research. | Ex. Since the beginning of time, there have been problems between the rich and poor.  
- This is a generalization because it lacks research: it does not provide a specific date or era as a reference point. |