Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. Usually when a writer sits down to respond to an assignment, he or she has at least some sense of the paper’s thesis statement or content. The details of your paper need to be introduced and concluded in a way that makes sense to your reader.

By providing an introduction that helps readers make a transition between their own world and the issues in this paper, the writer give readers the tools they need to understand the topic and invest in your positions and arguments. Similarly, once the writer has hooked the reader with the introduction and offered evidence to prove the thesis, the conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to the larger context.

**Introduction Guidelines**

- **Answer the Question:** Begin with the question (or questions) you are trying to answer. Your entire essay will be a response to this question, and your introduction is the first step to answering it. Your direct answer to the assigned question will be your thesis, which will be the final sentence of your introduction, so it is a good idea to use the question as a jumping off point.

- **Start Generally:** Decide the general context, theme, or concept that your thesis may fall under. Keep in mind that even a “big picture” opening needs to be clearly related to your topic. For example, if your thesis statement is about the low high school test scores in England, you might start the paper with a general statement about the concept of Education. Pay special attention to your first sentence. Start off on the right foot with your readers by making sure that the first sentence actually says something useful and that it does so in an interesting and polished way.

- **Get Specific:** As you continue writing the introduction beyond the first sentence, aim to add more details and increasing specificity. As you move through the introduction, each sentence should get more and more specific than the last. The final sentence in the introduction will be the most specific – your thesis statement. Check out the triangle introduction format below.

- **Start Small:** Don’t be afraid to write a tentative introduction first and then change it later. Some people find that they need to write some kind of introduction in order to get the writing process started. You might even try writing your introduction last. You may find that you don’t have a solid thesis at the beginning of the writing process, and only through the experience of writing your paper will you discover your main argument.

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http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/
Conclusion Guidelines

- **Emphasize the Argument:** You might consider beginning the conclusion by rephrasing your thesis statement in order to reiterate your most important point in the paper.

- **Avoid Repeating Ideas:** DO NOT merely summarize your paper in the conclusion and do not simply repeat ideas. Assume that you have an intelligent audience who understood your ideas when you presented them in the body paragraph. The conclusion is not a place to recap the whole paper. Use the space of the conclusion more effectively by connecting your ideas to broader concepts.

- **Return to the Larger Theme:** This strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.

- **Answer the “So What” Question:** In a conclusion, it is very useful to explain the stakes of your thesis statement by answering the following questions: What is the significance of your thesis? Why is it important to know? What are the consequences of your thesis statement? If your thesis statement is correct, then what kinds of affects will it have on the general topic or discipline? In short, “so what” if your thesis is true?

- **Connect to Broader Context:** Point to broader implications. For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.