INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Introduction and the Conclusion frame the argument of essays, case studies, reports etc. The Introduction draws the reader in and the Conclusion leaves the reader with a sense that all that is relevant has been discussed.

Introduction

The Introduction is the first impression a reader gets of your work (except for the title) so it’s worth taking time to plan what to include in it.

Depending on the question you are answering, essay Introductions can include the following:

- A general statement about the topic that engages the reader’s interest
- Some background information which places the topic in context.
- A definition of a key term (optional).
- A statement of the position you will argue for—your thesis statement
- An outline of the topics you will cover to develop your argument.

The Introduction moves from general statements at the beginning to ones focussed on the specifics of the essay at the end.

The Introduction is usually about 10% of your essay.

When do you write the Introduction?

It’s a good idea to write a preliminary Introduction at the beginning of the writing process. However, it’s best to write the final version just before you submit your assignment. Then you can make sure that what you have written in your Introduction agrees with what you have written in your essay, report etc.

Conclusion

The conclusion is the last impression your reader has of your essay so you want to make it as strong as possible.

Conclusions usually include the following:

- A rewording of the thesis statement.
- A summary of the main points made in key paragraphs.
- A general statement about the wider implications or applicability of what you have written about.

Note

The Conclusion is not the place to introduce new information. Ideas or recommendations mentioned in the Conclusion need to have come from points discussed in the body of the essay.

The Conclusion is a mirror image of the Introduction in that the information in it moves from specific to more general information.

The Conclusion is generally about 10% of your essay.
Planning

Knowing what makes an effective Introduction and Conclusion is a useful beginning but don't forget to leave yourself enough time to put your knowledge into practice.

Planning backwards from the date when your assignment is due to when you want to have your second draft completed to when you want your first draft completed will help ensure you leave enough time to write an effective Introduction and Conclusion for your assignments.

Use the STUDYSmarter assignment date calculator to help you plan all your assignments.


Writing

When writing the first draft of your Introduction and Conclusion, don't worry about getting it 'perfect'. Just get your ideas down. Cleaning up your expression and punctuation can be done in subsequent drafts.

Try writing the Introduction and Conclusion in tandem. This makes it easier to establish clear links between the two. If possible, set your essay aside for a day or two. Re-read your essay, then re-write the Introduction and Conclusion. This enables you write with ‘fresh’ eyes.

Learn from the work of others. Pay attention to how established writers begin and conclude journal articles and book chapters. Use some of the structures they use.

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