

# Writing an Introduction

One of the most intimidating parts of writing a paper can be deciding where to start, what to actually include in the introduction when you sit down to write that first sentence. However, it doesn't have to be intimidating. You make introductions every day. You introduce yourself to new people; you introduce acquaintances to each other. You may think, "No, it's not the same!" But, the goals are the same.

## Goals of an Introduction

When introducing acquaintances to each other, you usually have 3 main goals:

- *Capture their attention.*
- *Give them pertinent information to get them familiarized with this new person.*
- *Let them know **why** you are introducing them to this new person.*

Obviously, the information that you include is going to depend on the people you are introducing. For example:

### ***Scenario 1: When you are introducing friends to each other***

- You'll capture their attention with informal greetings and gestures.
- You'll provide basic information they would find interesting about each other.
- You'll tell them the reason you're introducing them, their common ground (even if that is just you) and you'll let them know common interests they share.

### ***Scenario 2: When you are introducing a friend to your favorite professor***

- You'll capture their attention with a more formal, polite greeting.
- You'll provide information that the teacher would care about, such as your friend's major and her recent volunteer work.
- You'll tell them why you are introducing them, such as your friend wanting to take the professor's class.

You would approach each scenario differently, because you have different audiences. So, begin your introduction by asking yourself four questions when creating an introduction:

1. Who is my ideal audience (your readers)?
2. What would capture my readers' attention? (*quotes, personal anecdotes, startling statistics, rhetorical questions, colorful stories?*)
3. What information would readers need to know in order to understand my topic? (*background info, important names and terms, dates and times, definitions?*)
4. What is the main point or reason that I'm introducing readers to my topic? (*We call this a rhetorical purpose and generally express it in a thesis statement!*)

If you can answer those questions about your paper, then you have an introduction!

## Deductive Organization

Generally speaking, introductory paragraphs have a deductive organization. That is, they start with a broad and general introduction to the topic, then develop that opening with subsequent sentences providing specific details. Those details lead to a specific thesis statement.

### *Example of an Introduction With a Deductive Organization:*

[Captures Attention/Generally Introduces Reader to Topic (Jean Rhys)] In a published interview with David Plante, the British-Dominican author, Jean Rhys, claimed “I don’t know other people. I never have known other people. I have only ever written about myself” (37). [Specific Details] Although not terribly appreciated for most of her career, Jean Rhys’s works escalated in popularity after the publication of her 1966 novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. She was lauded by critic Neville Braybrooke in 1967 as showing “the assured touch of a master,” and she was known for her disturbed, outcast heroines. [States Purpose of Paper] It is precisely these kinds of protagonists that she based upon herself, as is evident in looking at a comparison of her personal journal entries and the character of Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

In closing, some words of wisdom: **It is absolutely fine to write your introduction after you have completed your paper!** Topics evolve during the writing process, and our brains make connections as we write. So, you may not be able to think of a personal anecdote to begin your paper, but as you write you may recall one that would be an effective rhetorical opening for your paper. Or, as you are writing you may realize that there are definitions that you need to provide for readers in your introduction.

