

# The Art of the Introduction

The purpose of an introduction is to set up the ideas in your paper. An introduction paragraph provides the initial impression of your argument, showcases your writing style and voice, and establishes the overall direction of your work to your readers.

It will often include some background information that helps orient your reader to your topic. In the academic writing you are doing right now, the introduction will set your reader up to think about your **thesis statement\***, which will most often be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph.

Your introduction should capture your audience's interest and attention and should serve as a preview for your paper. Think of the introduction and conclusion paragraphs as "bookends" that hold together your paper's main ideas, or body paragraphs.

\*See the ASC Thesis Statement handout for strategies for writing an effective thesis statement.

The introduction should convey **the content, the style, and the organization** for the rest of your paper.

## The Content

Each essay genre has its own set of content.

- Research paper/argumentative paper: 1) background information on your topic/context; 2) overview of your paper's organization; 3) thesis statement
- Literary analysis paper: 1) any relevant background information; 2) author(s) and title of text(s); 3) overview of your paper's organization; 4) thesis statement
- Narrative paper: 1) setting (time and place); 2) narrative hook; 3) emphasis on voice; 4) no thesis statement

## The Organization

The introduction paragraph's logical organization is necessary in setting up your paper's argument.

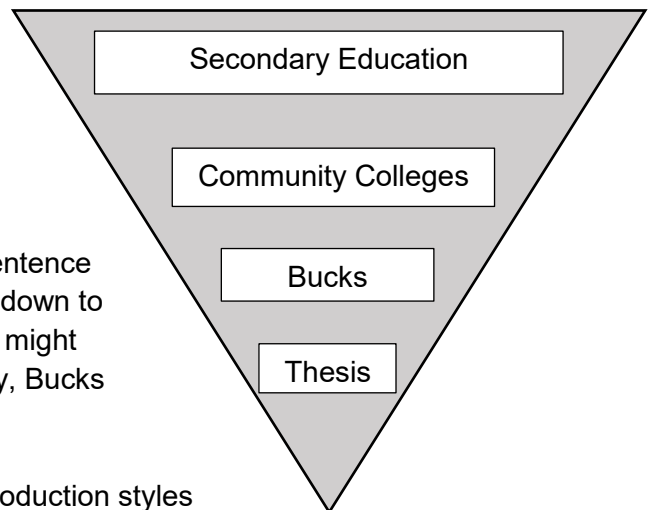
Begin with a general overview of the topic and then become more specific, narrowing to the thesis statement.

It may be helpful to think about the structure in terms of an upside-down triangle or a funnel.

If the topic is Bucks County Community College, the first sentence might be about secondary education. Next, it might narrow down to college in general, and why people might pursue college. It might narrow down a little more to community colleges, and finally, Bucks specifically.

On the next page, there are explanations of the various introduction styles as well as examples of each. Note that though each paragraph focuses on Bucks County Community College, the approaches to the topic are very different.

The type of essay being written will influence the approach you take to writing the introduction.



## **The Style**

Choosing a style for your introduction paragraph will help you avoid repetition of similar ideas and will help keep your material new and fresh. The style of the introduction will reflect your writer's voice and will set the tone for your paper.

There are different kinds of styles to choose from when composing an introduction:

- Analogy
- Allusion
- Anecdote/Narration
- Description
- Definition
- Example/Statistic

**Analogous Introductions make a comparison that will catch your reader's attention and will introduce your paper topic.**

The same movie is available for download in two different places, but one costs more; how long would it take someone to make the decision to go with the cheaper option? Both have the same HD quality, the same special director's cut with deleted scenes— the same everything— just one is less expensive? This is a decision that most, if not all, people would make very quickly. No one wants to pay more for the same exact movie. Think about all of that in terms of education. At Bucks, students can learn the same facts and figures, and the same techniques and skills as they would at a big expensive four-year university.

**Allusion Introductions make a reference to another literary work, person, or event.**

In 1962, Stella Elkins Tyler, a sculptor, bequeathed 200 acres of her estate in Newtown, Pennsylvania to Temple University. The Bucks County Board of Commissioners acquired this parcel of land to build a community college. The first classes began September 29, 1965. Built on a long tradition of generosity and creativity, Bucks County Community College continues that legacy by awarding hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships every year. While community colleges tend to be a more affordable option for secondary education, the scholarships available make it even more affordable for students to earn a degree. That affordability doesn't mean a lack of quality though.

**Anecdotal Introductions (or Narrative Introductions) start with a brief story that is closely related to your topic.**

Mary was an adult who had just left a career. She just couldn't continue what she was doing and had to leave, but she didn't have any prospects either. She didn't have the qualifications to do anything else. It was easy to have a bleak outlook. Then, she decided to make an investment in herself and her future. She decided to enroll in Bucks County Community College. At community colleges, like Bucks, there are so many options for people. Whether folks are just starting out or completely starting over, there is something for everyone at Bucks County Community College.

**Descriptive Introductions write a detailed description to illustrate a specific point about your topic.**

College— it is more than just a brick and mortar building full of books where students go to get an education. College, particularly a community college like Bucks, is a place where students can figure out who they are and who they want to be; they develop their distinct points of view. Students build connections there. They learn the basics about networking and team building. They develop communication skills. Students don't just learn these things in the classroom. They learn these kinds of lessons by participating in clubs and organizations, and by being a part of the community at a college like Bucks.

**Definition Introductions provide an explanation of a term that your paper will cover.** While you should explain any terms that your audience needs to know to understand your paper's content, it is important to avoid providing a dictionary definition such as: Webster's Dictionary defines "joy" as "great pleasure or happiness." This approach to an introduction is overly familiar or cliché.

When it comes to the term "secondary education," many people think immediately about 4-year universities. Actually, that term could also mean learning a trade or earning a certificate. Many students exit high school without much of an idea of what they are capable of, let alone what they want to do next. Whether or not students know what they want to do long-term, there is pressure to do something, and that is where community colleges, like Bucks County Community College, come in. There are so many courses and programs of study to choose from, including degree and certificate programs.

**Informational Introductions provide examples or statistics to open your discussion and to give a concrete example of your topic.** However, avoid overusing facts and leaving out your opinion or analysis - too many general examples and statistics will overshadow your writer's voice. And these details are typically found in the body of the paper, rather than in the introduction. Keep in mind that these elements should be used to support assertions made in the thesis statement, and all statistics should be accompanied by an in-text citation.

To be competitive in the job market, learning has to be a life-long endeavor. However, staying abreast of the latest industry developments and continuing to educate oneself while working can be difficult. It can be hard to know where one can get the best return on investment of time and money. Course variety and schedule flexibility are often primary concerns when thinking about continuing education, and Bucks County Community College should be on the list of schools considered. According to their website, they offer "over 300 credit courses in the eLearning and Hybrid modalities," not to mention that "21 Programs and 7 Certificates can be completed in their entirety through eLearning courses."

Overall, as the writer, you have many options for introducing your essay. Use the above examples as a guide, and remember to review your introduction after you have completed your paper. This will help to ensure that all of your material works together to present an interesting and logical flow of information.

Happy writing!