

Introductions 101

How not to lose your reader before you make your point.

The Intro

Start with a **hook**, a general statement to get your reader into the ballpark. You should engage your reader with something that grabs his or her attention. Here are a few ideas:

- Open with an unusual detail
Contrary to popular belief, the Cascade Mountains were not all formed through volcanic activity.
- Open with a strong, shocking statement
During the Jim Crow era, the state of Florida had more lynchings per capita than any other state in the Union.
- Try a starting with a quote
Infamous Hollywood director W.C. Fields once said “anyone who hates dogs and children can’t be all bad.”
- Engage the reader with an anecdote*
Note: Anecdotes can provide an attention-getting opening if they are short and to the point. So keep them short and to the point.
- Start with a statistic or fact
One in eight people do not have enough food to eat.
- Use an interesting question to grab some attention
Could you give up a cup of coffee a day to help provide water to an entire village?

Next, give us a little bit of context. Narrow down the point of the paper by citing your sources (title and author(s) included) and by demonstrating how they connect to your introduction.

Could you give up a cup of coffee a day to help provide water to an entire village? By giving up things as simple as a morning coffee, a muffin, or a lunch at a restaurant once a week it is possible to save enough money to pay for a well to be drilled in Africa that will provide fresh water to hundreds of families.

Finally, complete your introduction by adding your thesis. Without a strong thesis, your entire introduction will be ruined. Without a thesis, you may have not even begun.

... We all need to carefully examine our own habits and determine how much we really need, and how much we can give away to those in need. Everyone is capable of doing something for the less fortunate. It is the right thing to do.

***Anecdote:** A short story that illustrates a point.