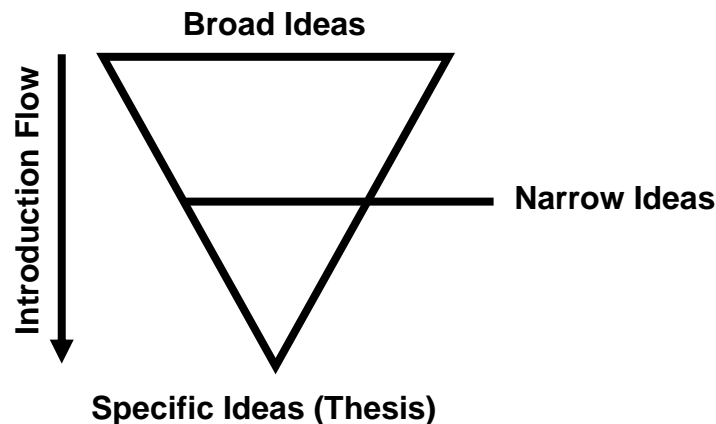


Introductions and Conclusions

Introductions and conclusions can be the hardest parts of a paper to write. In research, many scholars solely look at introductions and conclusions to quickly find out whether or not a publication is useful for their research.

The Introduction

Starting an introduction can be a daunting task. You have to think about the whole paper and create one to two paragraphs that will tell your audience what your paper is about in an interesting way. In longer papers, introductions may include a road map that details how the paper is subdivided. This task can be made easier by thinking of introductions not as a line-by-line writing task, but as a structure: an inverted funnel.



When you begin your introduction, you want to begin more narrowly than something like “Cellphone use has become more prevalent in recent years;” however, you want to begin more broadly than “We should support laws against texting and driving.” The reason you want to begin somewhere in the narrow area of the funnel is you want to give your topic context and background, so your audience can understand where your ideas are coming from.

Beginning an introduction using narrow ideas would read something like this:

Over the past 10 years, teen-driving deaths have risen significantly because of texting and driving. Many states still do not have laws against using cellphones while driving, but for those states with texting and driving laws, the threat of hefty fines keeps many citizens from using their phones while driving. This reduction in texting and driving is the reason we should support texting and driving laws.



The introduction functions as the hook that gets your reader interested in your paper. If you think of a movie, the introduction is the preview. Introductions are a summary of your paper, but they do not include any evidence or analysis. In American academic papers, the thesis statement or main argument is usually the last sentence in the introduction.

Below are two samples of introductions from two different genres of writing: English and Human Geography, respectively. The bolded sentences at the end of each sample highlight the main idea/argument (thesis) of each paper.

English

In Shakespeare's *King Henry IV Part One* and *King Henry IV Part Two*, Hal must decide to either keep Falstaff and the tavern folk in his company or cast them away to redeem his princely reputation. While Hal is a prince, Falstaff is a knight who steals; from the text, readers already know this social distinction between the two characters. However, Orson Welles furthers this social distance by taking the white space in the text and interpreting it as physical space for his film *Chimes at Midnight* (1965). **Through spatial arrangement, Welles creates a visual representation of the distance between Hal and Falstaff that reinforces their differences in status and prepares viewers for Hal's decision to banish Falstaff from his company.**

Human Geography

In August of 2017, the rainfall from Hurricane Harvey broke the U.S. record for most rainfall ever recorded, most of which fell in and around Houston, Texas. Excessive rainfall caused massive flooding, which affected vulnerable populations in the Houston area in ways that exceed simply rebuilding or moving. After natural disasters, many low-income families do not have enough money to rebuild, relocate, or cope with the mental and physical health issues that stem from the dirty industrial waste carried by the flood waters. This research focuses on a particular case study: the social effects of Hurricane Harvey in Harrisburg/Manchester, a small low-income neighborhood along Buffalo Bayou in East Houston. This neighborhood is surrounded by chemical, production plants, and industrial shipping docks. In many cases, dirty industry is right next to family homes without anything more than a chain-link fence to separate the two plots of land. Environmental injustices against vulnerable populations leads to recovery efforts that last much longer than the physical destruction that can accompany natural disasters. **The lack of a right to a quality environment is a societal issue that governments must address to ensure equal treatment of all citizens, regardless of race, income, or other socio-economic factor.**

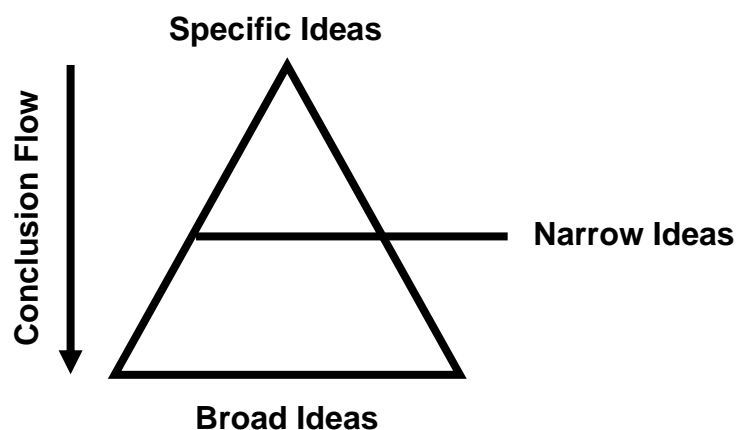
Conclusions

Conclusions can be just as difficult to write as the introduction. Many people believe the conclusion is a rehash of the introduction, but that isn't really the point of a conclusion. The conclusion will have a small summary of what you talked about in the paper, like the introduction; however, the conclusion will synthesize your claim, the evidence you provided, and **where your paper fits in the larger understanding of your topic.**

The term "synthesize" may sound complicated, but it simply means to take your research or findings and relate them to each other, your thesis, and your field. For example, you are writing a fictitious essay about Shakespeare. In your research, you find that Shakespeare used the figure of a grey cloud to represent the barriers between humans and their individual desires. When writing your conclusion, you could tie your finding to the greater topic of Shakespeare by answering this general question: how does your research finding fit within our larger understanding of Shakespeare as an author and playwright? If you are writing a scientific paper and your topic is the need for a safer crop fertilizer, how would your research fit into the larger understanding of crop growth and human health? What new research questions might your findings pose?

While you don't want to introduce new arguments or evidence in your conclusion, you want to create space for discussion with and among your audience.

In the exact opposite fashion of the introduction, your conclusion should be an upright triangle that begins with the concluding topic sentence. This sentence will summarize what you talked about in your paper. Then, you can further explain any discussion topics or new areas of interest that arose from your argument.



Using the same papers from the introduction samples, below are sample conclusions to those papers:

English

Welles constantly uses spatial arrangement in *Chimes at Midnight* to create a physical distance between Hal and Falstaff that visually foreshadows the latter's banishment. Hal has ruined his reputation by hanging out with Falstaff and spending time at the tavern. Because of this, people no longer expect Hal to act appropriate to his social position. Only by casting away Falstaff and the tavern folk can Hal redeem his reputation and be considered a true prince worthy of inheriting the throne. In the film, Hal and Falstaff are seen at a distance from each other during certain scenes, which reinforces their differences in social standing because one is royalty and the other is a thieving knight. By incorporating physical distance into the two characters' already socially distant relationship, Welles sets viewers up for the decision that Hal must ultimately make: continue spending time with the common folk or banish them from his company completely. By constantly seeing the motif of physical distance throughout the film, viewers understand and expect that Hal will choose his royal reputation over Falstaff and banish him in the end.

Human Geography

The government policies surrounding public planning and disaster recovery must change. The continuing devastation of Hurricane Harvey must be understood in terms of what policies were in place for communities before the storm hit: differing resource funds, differing building grades, and differing insurance policies. These differences determined who was able to rebuild or relocate and who was forced to live in a rotting home covered in toxic residue from nearby, flooded chemical plants. By understanding the societal mechanisms put in place by neoliberal governing, we can begin to create change in policies that will allow vulnerable populations to live in a healthy and quality environment.