

THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

- 1.) The introductory paragraph contains three parts:
 - a.) background statement (lead in)
 - b.) thesis statement
 - c.) outline statement (thesis map)

- 2.) A **background** or **lead-in** statement either serves as an “attention grabber” or provides a brief context for the topic discussed in the essay. It can take the form of:

a.) general to specific lead-in

EX: Certain foods are simply indispensable. Mayonnaise is one of these foods.

THESIS: Many delicious dishes would be impossible or terribly bland without this rich condiment.

b.) background information

EX: Soap operas have been broadcast since the early radio days. Today, on television, they still engross millions of viewers, both men and women.

THESIS: The primary reason for their success is their sordid subject matter.

c.) a quotation or literary allusion

EX: “I think on-stage nudity is disgusting, shameful, and damaging to all things American,” says Shelley Winters. “But if I were twenty-two with a great body, it would be artistic, tasteful, patriotic, and a progressive religious experience.”

THESIS: Ms. Winters’ statement effectively focuses on one of the problems of censorship: It often reflects the censor’s personal problems and biases.

d.) description

EX: Entrails, severed heads, slashed throats, spurting arteries--these are common ingredients in a type of movie known as the Splatter Film.

THESIS: Such a film measures its success by how much blood fills the screen and how many people run from their seats covering their mouths.

e.) comparison or contrast

EX: The Romans kept geese on their Capitol Hill to cackle alarm in the event of attacks by night. Modern Americans often use electronic systems that buzz or ring or flash in an effort to deter criminals.

THESIS: The best way, however, both to deter criminals and to capture them is not with noise but with silence: Posting signs and using silent alarms are the most effective means of home security.

f.) statement of a problem or a popular misconception

EX: Some people believe that poetry is written only by aging beatniks or solemn mournful men and women with suicidal tendencies.

THESIS: The Poetry in the Schools Program is out to correct that erroneous point of view.

g.) a catalog of relevant examples

EX: A four-hundred-pound teenager quit school because no desk would hold her. A five-hundred-pound chef who could no longer stand on his feet was fired. A three-hundred-fifty-pound truck driver broke furniture in his friends' houses.

THESIS: All these people are now living better, happier, and thinner lives, thanks to the remarkable intestinal by-pass surgery first developed in 1967.)

- 3.) The **thesis** statement is a sentence (or more) which presents the main idea (the unifying, controlling idea) of the essay.

- a.) A thesis contains a judgment, a point of view, a proposition, a stance, an attitude, an opinion, a belief, etc.
- b.) A thesis offers an interpretation, an analysis of the material developed in the composition.

EX: Sinclair has one of the finest nursing programs among two-year colleges in the United States.

- 4.) The **outline statement (thesis map)** lists the sub-points which will develop the thesis. (Note: Not all essays need an outline statement/thesis map. Check with your instructor about his/her policy regarding the outline statement/thesis map.)
- a.) These sub-points are listed in the same order they appear in the body of the essay.
 - b.) The terms used to convey these sub-points should be repeated in the topic sentences in the body of the essay.

A traditional introduction would include all three elements: lead-in, thesis, and map:

Lead-in: Soap operas have been broadcast since the early radio days. Today, on television, they still engross millions of viewers, both men and women.

Thesis: The primary reason for their success is their sordid subject matter.

Map: Soap operas portray infidelity, drug abuse, and incest.

Directions: In the following introductory paragraph, label the lead-in, thesis, and map:

When I first began teaching at Sinclair Community College in the early 1980s, placement in developmental courses was not mandatory. Students took a reading, math, and English test after they registered, and counselors used the results to recommend courses, whether at the pre-college, developmental level or at the regular college level. Though students were strongly urged to follow placement suggestions, they could decide to accept or reject the advice. This policy changed a few years later so that students were required to take developmental courses indicated by their scores. Although research tends to show that mandatory placement leads to higher retention of students, such a policy has more drawbacks than benefits both for the student and for the teacher. The problematic areas have to do with decision-making, respect, and attitude.