

Introductions

The goal of your introduction is to “hook” your readers: pique their curiosity, surprise them, draw them into your topic and make them want to read more. No matter how important or profound your thesis is, your arguments will have zero impact if you lose your reader in the first two lines. Even if your reader is an instructor who is required to read your paper, a creative and enthralling introduction can make his or her task more enjoyable, as well as showcase your writing talents. First impressions are important: a good one may even help your overall grade.

So, imagine that your instructor has assigned you to write an essay on this topic:

Should publicly-funded art projects be required to meet certain standards defining what is socially acceptable?

Here are some strategies for beginning this essay:

- **Narrative** People are trained in our culture, from constant exposure to books, TVs, and movies, to follow stories, so using narratives to introduce essays is a great strategy.

Example: Susan jumped off the bus, laughing and chattering with her fellow art students. They walked into the museum, and their eyes shone as they examined paintings by Picasso, Rembrandt and Monet. Then they stepped into the room dedicated to contemporary art. A hush fell; they stopped and stared. The museum walls were bare.

- **Descriptive** Use the five senses to create textual images. If these images are rich and vivid, your reader will follow.

Example: Violin and flute music swelled as the curtain rose. The dancer stood poised, her body a graceful curve; the sequins on her tulle skirt sparkled. Her partner pirouetted from the wings and they danced their first clumsy steps, hampered by the chains and weights encasing their arms and legs. The writer, Ray Bradbury, described this scene, which sprang from his vision of a totalitarian society based on absolute conformity and government control of the arts.

- **Factual** Though not as creative as the above examples, this may be appropriate for more formal essays and term papers.

Example: The recent controversy over Roger Mapleson's photographs shows that many Americans believe that the government should establish guidelines for publicly funded art projects.

- **Quotation** Whether it's humorous, controversial, poignant or shocking, a high-impact quote can pull in your reader. Also, if you're stuck for ideas, a quick search through your notes on the material you've researched will usually reveal an appropriate quote.

Example: According to a study by Joseph Baci, 75% of all artists would be unable to support themselves, and their art, without public funding.

• **Anecdotal** Once again you're telling a story—in this case you add additional impact because the event you're retelling has actually happened to you. Don't be afraid to change or add to the real events that occurred in order to heighten impact; your goal is to engage your reader. However, some instructors discourage the use of the first person, so check with him or her before you choose this option.

Example: Many years ago in Chicago I had a friend named Fawn, who was an artist. The colors and shapes of the clay pots she modeled reflected the richness of her Native American heritage. Though her family had little money, her dream was to go to art school. I remember the glow in her eyes the day she told me that the Art Institute had offered her a scholarship. The National Endowment for the Arts provided the money she received; without it, she might never have realized her dream.

For more assistance with introductions, or with any stage of the writing process,
visit The Writing Center or call us to make an appointment.



Flowers Hall G09 ☞ 512.245.3018 ☞ M–Th 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. F 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.