

Effective Introductions: STAMP



Introduction Approaches to Avoid

- General comments about human nature/society
- Obviously false stories.
- Generic, weak questions that are easily answered
- Opening with a quotation
- Generalized, clichéd, trite observations or truisms
- Opening with the author/title of the piece

Structure of an Effective Introduction

For timed writes, it's best to keep introductions focused and sharply written. Typically, they should be no more than five sentences and, written well, can be as short as three.

- **HOOK:** Attention grabbing beginning
- **BRIDGE:** Transition from the opening specific detail/story/etc. to the broader topic. It's best to make the bridge suggest the position the essay will eventually take, rather than presenting two sides of the issue in an anodyne filler phrase.
- **THESIS:** The central argument of the piece.

Techniques

1. **Shock** your audience with a statistic. It should be shocking, but plausible.
2. **Tell** a story/establish a scenario. (Literary or real) Ideally, this will be bookended in your conclusion.
3. **Analogize** with an effective comparison.
4. **Misdirect** the reader by hinting that you will be talking about one subject or point of view before reversing the argument on him.
5. **Personalize** with an effective anecdote.

Thoughts on the Opening Sentence

- The opening phrase calls for powerful language. Effective writers should open with strong words that evoke imagery when possible.
- **OKAY INTRO SENTENCE:** When you drink a glass of milk, you're getting more than wholesome calories...
- **EFFECTIVE INTRO:** Pus. Hormones. Mucous. Hardly what we imagine each time we take a drink from a glass of milk ...

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Sample Introductions (Hook and Bridge)

STATISTIC

While millions of high school students are involved with sports in America today, only around five percent go on to participate in NCAA college athletics; out of all college athletes, less than one percent go on to play their sport professionally. The odds of scoring the winning touchdown in the Super Bowl, hitting a home run to clinch the World Series, or representing the Stars and Stripes in the World Cup are almost zero. Why then, is there such an emphasis on high school athletics today? The United States may be the best country at football or basketball, but is steadily falling behind in the classroom. In high schools all around the country, the emphasis needs to shift from attempting to develop superstar athletes to successfully creating the next generation of intellectuals; the future of America is too important to take a backseat to Friday night lights. (THESIS)

TELL A STORY

Mere hours after the Virginia Tech massacre, before the perpetrator was even identified, news outlets reported that violent video games were the reason for the dozens injured and murdered. Further investigation revealed that the gunman suffered from mental illness and had no history of playing any violent video games. Incidents of politicians and newscasters placing the blame for real-world violence on movies and video games has become more and more common. While the media normalizes violence, the fact that underlying issues are usually the cause for violence and how politicians incorrectly blame the media for violence demonstrate that violent movies, television, and video games do not result in real world violence.

ANALOGIZE

In American history, one time period in particular was filled with an unprecedented sense of adventure and spirit; the Wild West offered a dream of testing oneself against an unpredictable wilderness, and the opportunity to follow whatever path a person desired. As the decades passed by and the world became smaller due to increased urbanization and larger world markets, the final frontier seemed to disappear. However, it was reborn in the nineteen-fifties and sixties with the emergence of space travel. It brought back the sense of adventure that the West produced, even though it was much more impractical, costly, and unavailable to the everyday person than moving to the Pacific had ever been. Venturing into space is an example of human arrogance in thinking that something infinitely complex can be easily understood, and it draws time and resources away from fixing the world that is currently lived in. (THESIS)

MISDIRECTION

In a society brainwashed to believe that one race of people was genetically, morally, and physical superior to another, students were exposed celebrations and classroom information that transformed them from believing in the value of all human beings into bigots who viewed their history with prejudiced eyes. While these abuses certainly happened in countries like the ones likely to come to mind first like Nazi Germany, our own society has not been immune from this kind of blindness. In the United States today, every October we celebrate the achievements of a man who enslaved indigenous peoples and began a mad rush for colonial exploitation. (THESIS)