

## Guide to Writing an Introductory Paragraph

Your introductory paragraph in a literary analysis paper need not be longer than four or five sentences. Follow the basic guidelines, and you should have a good start:

**1) Hook sentence(s):** (attention- getting sentence)

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**2) Set-up/Hints** (includes **title, author, and genre** and connects to your hook and/or thesis statement):

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**3) \*Focusing theme/idea** (says more about sentence 1 and 2. optional extra sentences providing a smooth transition to your thesis statement):

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**4) Thesis statement** (expresses the main idea of your paper and what you intend to prove in the body of your essay. Must have clear subject, opinion, and information as to why the subject and opinion re important/relevant.

1. open thesis statement: The media plays an influential role in criminal court trials, perhaps too influential.
2. closed thesis statement: Installing street lights at least ten feet high is a good idea because they light up a wider area, are more difficult to vandalize, and they don't block people's view.

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**Example** ninth grade introductory paragraph for an essay on *To Kill a Mockingbird*:

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view--until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (Lee 33). In the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, the two main characters, Jem and Scout, have the opportunity to consider the viewpoints of many adults in their small town, Maycomb. By following their father's advice and trying to consider the perspectives of three different people, Jem and Scout learn valuable life-long lessons.

## Body Paragraph # \_\_\_\_\_

**1) Topic sentence** (tied to a major point -- or **reason** given -- in the thesis statement)

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**2) Support #1** (a **general** example for the reason listed in the topic sentence) \_\_\_\_\_

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**3) Detail/Example** – (provides evidence from the text to prove your support is true (be sure to introduce the quote!))

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**4) Commentary 1** – (comments on and explains importance of the detail (explains why you chose the quote you're using—why it is important to the essay))

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**5) Commentary 2** – (additional comments relating back to reason #1)

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**TURN OVER TO CONTINUE PARAGRAPH**

**6) Support #2** (a **general** example for the reason listed in the topic sentence) \_\_\_\_\_

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**7) Detail/Example** – (provides evidence from the text to prove your support is true (be sure to introduce the quote!))

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**8) Commentary 1** – (comments on and explains importance of the detail (explains why you chose the quote you’re using—why it is important to the essay))

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**9) Commentary 2** – (additional comments relating back to reason #1)

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**10) Conclusion** (or clincher) sentence (the last sentence of the paragraph should provide a smooth transition to the next paragraph)

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Mr. Van Daan’s pessimistic attitude is one of his most annoying traits. His negativity is apparent in the scene where he asks his wife what is being served for dinner. She answers her husband by saying, “Beans,” and Mr. Van Daan complains, “Not again” (361). Instead of being grateful for the food that Miep and the Frank family work so hard to provide, he shows only disappointment and disgust. People are rationing food during war-time, and Miep risks her life daily trying to buy food on the Black Market, yet Mr. Van Daan thinks of nothing but his own appetite. Another example of Mr. Van Daan’s gloomy outlook is when he speaks to the bewildered Mr. Dussel upon his sudden arrival in the Annex. Mr. Van Daan asks Dussel, “Did Mr. Kraler warn you that you won’t get much to eat here? You can imagine . . . and now you make eight” (369). In this situation, Mr. Van Daan’s reaction is the exact opposite of the warm hospitality that Mr. Frank shows his guest. Instead of thinking of the importance of saving another life, he thinks only of the difficulties created by adding another refugee to the hiding place. It is no wonder that Anne Frank writes such scathing comments in her diary about the ill-mannered Mr. Van Daan.

## Conclusion

You conclusion is a short paragraph summing up the paper; one last chance to convince the readers of your thesis/opinion. All the conclusion needs is three or four strong sentences which do not need to follow any set formula. Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. Such a conclusion will help them see why all your analysis and information should matter to them after they put the paper down.

**1) Restatement:** (begin with a restatement of the thesis, but use new words to avoid repetition) \_\_\_\_\_

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**2) Synthesize, don't summarize:** (don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. They have read it. Show them how the points you made and the support and examples you used were not random, but fit together.)

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**3) Create a new meaning** (you don't have to give new information to create a new meaning. By demonstrating how your ideas work together, you can create a new picture. Often the sum of the paper is worth more than its parts) \_\_\_\_\_

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**4) Redirect your readers** (give your reader something to think about, perhaps a way to use your paper in the "real" world. If your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general. Think globally.) \_\_\_\_\_

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Example: The problem of teen gang violence can be eliminated. It will, however, take time, money, and a combined effort on the part of many people. Organized, free, after-school programs such as: sports teams and games; art, music, and drama activities; internships in local area businesses and professional organizations; and interesting volunteer activities in the community would help engage teens in worthwhile pursuits outside of school hours. More job opportunities for teens, especially those funded by state and local programs, would offer income for teens as well as productive work for the community. Outreach to families through schools, community organizations, and places of worship would help promote inter-generational activities that could improve family closeness, helping teens to work on their problems at the family level, instead of taking them to the streets. If these programs can be implemented, we will surely see a decrease in teen gang activity and safer streets and neighborhoods for us all.