

How to write a good introduction

Why a good introduction is important

An introduction is important in any assessment as it sets the scene for the rest of your assessment, shows that you are organised, and informs the reader of your position in relation to the topic. It also identifies the main points you intend to develop.

What goes into a good introduction

Typically, an introduction is only one paragraph and is made up of three to four main sub-parts.

Your introduction should:

1. give an *orientation* to the topic, with information that explains WHY the topic/theme of the assessment is important or relevant;
2. provide definitions to explain *key terms* if required;
3. tell the reader WHAT your position is in relation to the topic, or WHAT you will discuss or analyse. This is often called a *thesis statement* or *position statement* and could be a restatement of your task question. For example, in an argument type essay, you would state whether your paper will argue for, against, or is neutral, towards the topic;
4. identify HOW you will support your argument by listing each of the main points you will discuss. Introduce these key points in the same order that you will discuss them in the body of your essay (see [Organising information for your assessments Quick Guide](#) under *Analysing and Preparing for Assessments*).

You should not develop your points in the introduction, as that comes later.

Sample Introductions

Here is an *introductory* paragraph in response to an essay task:

What is meant by globalisation? Discuss the effects of globalisation on at least two of the following: trade, manufacturing, consumerism, international relations, cultural identity.

The parts of the introduction are colour coded:

Since the end of the Cold War and the triumph of capitalism as the world's dominant economic system globalisation has become a growing phenomenon. The term globalisation describes the increasing contact and interdependence among national economies and the increasingly international nature of markets, capital, labour and technology (Smith, 2012, p. 3). Globalisation has brought with it a rapid increase in international social, cultural and technological exchange. Despite concerns about the detrimental effects of globalisation on developing nations and cultural identities, the interdependence of national economies and societies continues to increase. This paper will argue that the effects of globalisation on trade, manufacturing and international relations cannot really be avoided and can be viewed as both positive and negative depending on who is doing the viewing.

Orientation to topic (WHY it is important or relevant), definition, thesis statement (WHAT your position is in relation to the topic), main points to be developed (HOW you will support your argument).

Here is another *introduction* in response to a different task:

Avoidance of obesity is an important factor in maintaining health and retarding the progression of chronic disease. Discuss. (1500 words)

The parts of the introduction are colour coded:

There are many factors which contribute increases and decreases in and maintenance of health and vitality in individuals. One such factor is obesity. According to McLaren and Meguid (1988, p. 148), obesity occurs when there is an imbalance in the height-to-weight ratio in individuals, specifically where the weight component is too high for the height factor. An excess of body fat of 20% or more is classed as obese. Whilst many other factors contribute to the loss of general well-being and to the onset of disease, it will be shown that avoidance of obesity is an important factor in maintaining health and retarding the progression of chronic disease. This paper will assess the effects of obesity on the quality of life physically, psychologically, socially and economically. From the results of this assessment, it will be argued that obesity is such a serious risk to health and well-being that serious and focused action is often necessary to avoid being obese.

Orientation to topic (WHY it is important or relevant), definition, thesis statement (WHAT your position is in relation to the topic), main points to be developed (HOW you will support your argument).

See the *SCU Learning Zone* for more related Quick Guides.