

# Introductions and conclusions

## Paragraphs with special requirements

An introduction is usually 5-10% of the length of an academic paper and should tell your reader exactly what your paper is about and how it is structured. Your reader gains his or her first impression of your paper from this section, so an effective introduction is vital.

Generally, introductions begin with some brief background or contextual information that provides a focus for your paper. This should be followed by a clear articulation of your controlling argument or point of view - a sentence that is sometimes called a 'thesis statement'. The thesis statement must directly respond to the set question or topic and can sometimes be indicated by phrases such as "this paper will argue that" or "it will be argued here". Next, a preview of how you will support your argument should be presented, with a clear indication of the order in which you will proceed; this process can be indicated by such phrases as "in order to explore these issues, this paper will first...", "this will be followed by...", "the paper will conclude with..." etc.

The introduction should also clarify how you intend to interpret or limit the question. You may also need to define key terms, or theoretical approaches. Do not 'pad' your introduction with extraneous material, rather, relate this section directly to the set question or topic. In doing so, it can be useful to incorporate some of the actual words of the question into your introduction.

## **The introduction should tell your reader:**

- How you understand the topic (eg. context, background, key terms)
- What your controlling argument is
- What issues you will cover (and in which order)
- What conclusion you will reach



Writing an essay is not like writing a mystery novel! Aim to be transparent. Your reader should not have to read several pages before finding out what your argument, or thesis, is.

Following is an example of an introduction with its key aspects identified in the right hand column.

**Question: Industry assistance has been described as 'complex' and 'problematic' and many have called for its removal. Discuss.**

<p><i>In Australia, the extent of assistance, via both direct financial assistance and protection, varies greatly between industries and between specific sectors of industries. In its broadest sense assistance is given to industries in order to attempt to stabilize the industry during difficult periods or to enable the industry to adapt to long term changes in the economy. Due to changes in agriculture world wide, caused by the price squeeze and volatile world export markets, assistance has been given to Australian <b>agriculture</b>. During the period 1982-83 the direct cost of this assistance was just under \$500 million (Johnson et al., 1983).</i></p> <p><i>In this essay the forms of agricultural assistance will be discussed in terms of the type of assistance, the rates of assistance to agriculture in comparison with those of other industries, the effects of assistance, and finally, whether assistance can be justified. <b>It will be argued throughout the paper that, despite the problems associated with assistance, and despite the complex nature of the issue, there should be assistance of several kinds so that the agricultural sector is able to maintain its economic viability. In particular, it will be argued that this assistance is at its most effective when it is target specific.</b></i></p>	<p><b>General background material</b></p> <p><b>Indicator of specific focus</b></p> <p><b>Issues which will be covered and indication of the order</b></p> <p><b>Statement of argument</b> (controlling argument, thesis statement, point of view, major focus)</p> <p><b>Indication of conclusion</b></p>
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## The conclusion

A conclusion should bring together different sections of the essay. The assertions you made in your introductory paragraph should have been fully developed and substantiated, so that you can bring together all of the strands of explanation, refer back to the topic and end on a well-reasoned, logical note.

Your conclusion should not offer any new material. Rather, consider telling your reader:

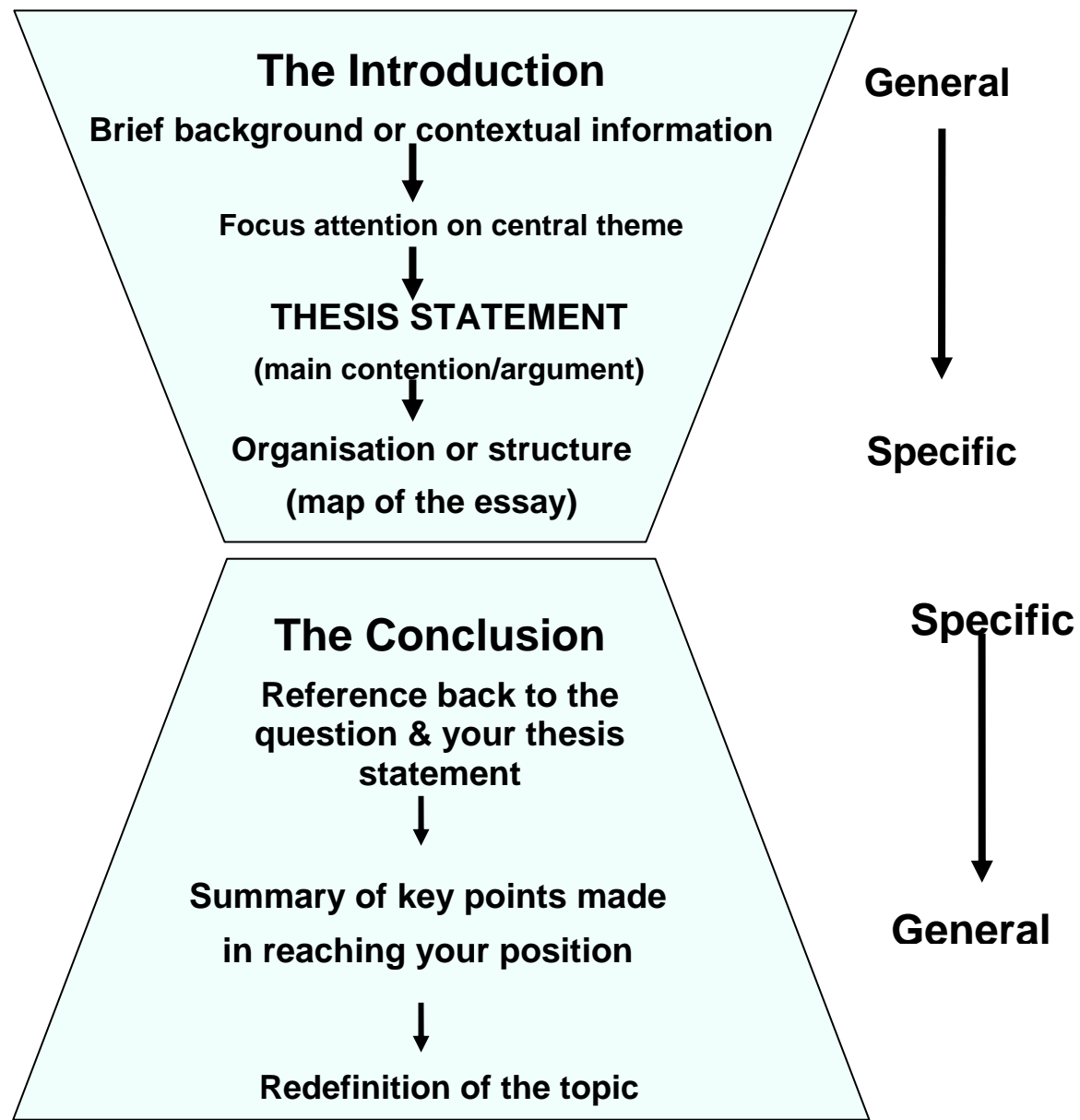
- What the significance of your findings, or the implications of your conclusion, might be
- Whether there are other factors which need to be looked at, but which were outside the scope of the essay
- What future research you suggest needs to be done

However, don't simply repeat yourself. A conclusion which merely summarizes is repetitive and reduces the impact of your paper.

Following is a conclusion that matches the above introduction with its key aspects identified in the right hand column.

<p><i>The comparative analysis across the industry sectors offered in this essay therefore, indicates that for the agricultural sector in particular, <b>economic viability can only be maintained when assistance is offered at a variety of levels.</b> Further, as the economic crisis of 82/83 shows, <b>target specific assistance</b> is an extremely successful crisis-management tool. <b>To claim that industry assistance should be abandoned because it is 'complex' and 'problematic' therefore, fails to acknowledge the substantial benefits that the scheme has delivered over the last decade. Indeed, while more needs to be done to address the complex problems associated with various assistance initiatives, the advantages of target specific measures are a promising benchmark for future enterprise.</b></i></p>	<p><b>Revisiting major themes of the essay</b></p> <p><b>Restatement of controlling argument</b></p> <p><b>Restatement of indicated conclusion</b> (part of the controlling argument)</p> <p><b>Reference back to the question</b></p> <p><b>Suggested future research</b></p>
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## Key structural elements of introductions and conclusions



### References

Bate, D., & Sharpe, P. (1996). *Writer's Handbook: how to write better essays*. Sydney : Harcourt Brace.

Clanchy, J., & Ballard, B. (1986). *Essay Writing for Students: a practical guide*. Melbourne: Longman.

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