

Writing Introductions & Conclusions

INTRODUCTIONS

Strong Introductions tend to....

- Start with a sentence that **introduces your specific topic** and then offer **some context** about why it's an important topic to study: What are some of the important issues surrounding this topic? (race, gender, sexuality, politics?) Why does this matter now—is your topic related to current issues? What specific audiences might find this interesting or useful?
- Establish **why this work matters**: why study this topic? Who would benefit from this type of study? What drew you to this particular subject of study? What research question are you pursuing in the essay? Part of the “why” also involves a very general sense of what others have said about this topic: Who are the key stakeholders? Does everyone agree? What perspectives do interested-people have and why? What conflicts and tensions exist?
- Establish a concise **summary of your project** in the paper (Aims, Methods, Materials):
 - What materials do you analyze? (TV clips, a theorist's concept, research studies, etc.)
 - What do you do with them? (analyze, synthesize, explore, interpret)
 - What's your purpose? (in order to....)
 - Ex: I use Theorist X's idea of Y to study 4 different magazine ads for alcohol in order to show how [larger concept (e.g., masculinity, race, etc.)] works to [what you found].
- Offer a **claim/thesis**. Thesis sentences usually make an argument, based on what you examine in your essay, about how something (the thing you're studying—text, image, subject) works. It's usually best to write the paper and then develop an argument, so that your argument is grounded in evidence and what you actually do in the essay.

Workshop Intros

Switch papers with a partner or small group, and then:

1. Try to identify each of the above components of a strong intro (the words in red) in your peer's essay. As you identify them, write down/label them.
2. Notice and make notes on your partner's paper about what their Introduction is not doing from the above list.
3. Notice and make notes on your partner's paper about what needs a bit more explanation from the above list. (For example, maybe they briefly note that two scholars are debating topic X, but you believe a little bit more context would be useful for readers.)
4. Discuss what you wrote down for 2 & 3 with your partner. Try to be as specific as possible about what information is missing or could be more clearly explained.

CONCLUSIONS

Strong Conclusions tend to...

- **Restate your research question.** You might reframe your question as a sentence, for example: Essentially, in this essay, I have been studying how hallway conversations inform teaching in this particular community of high school teachers. Or, you might list some questions: In this essay I have been tackling the following questions: how are video games a literacy? What learning happens through video game play?
- **Reflect on the value of studying these materials/texts:** why has it been useful to study the artifacts you've looked at? What new perspectives have you gained? Who else might find this useful and how so?

You might say something like: Originally, I always assumed that language worked the same in every situation; however, after studying the chat room communications in this game, I found that this community of gamers really does have its own writing conventions and expectations. My findings regarding gaming communication might be useful for game developers, as they design platforms and digital spaces that better foster friendly game-time chat.

- **Identify significant findings.** In the above example, I would encourage the writer to specifically name what they find rather than the vague "My findings." Ideally, when you restate significant findings you do so by directly connecting the findings to the value of the work—or to your answer to the "so what?" question. Otherwise, restating findings can feel repetitive, simplistic, and boring.
- **Look ahead to what's left to study:** Is your research exhaustive? Or, do you have any other additional questions or directions for further research? You might say: Even though studying these two textual artifacts has been informative, it would be interesting to look further at X. OR, Although I found some interesting things out about how language works in this community, I think looking at the website had some limitations; specifically, the website as a site of study was limiting because... OR, This work leads me to wonder about X....

Workshop Conclusions

Switch papers with a partner or small group, and then:

1. Try to identify each of the above components of a strong conclusion (the words in red) in your peer's essay. As you identify them, write down/label them.
2. Notice and make notes on your partner's paper about what their conclusion is not doing from the above list.
3. Notice and make notes on your partner's paper about what needs a bit more explanation from the above list.
4. Discuss what you wrote down for 2 & 3 with your partner. Try to be as specific as possible about what information is missing or could be more clearly explained.