

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? Why does this matter now—is your topic related to current issues? What specific audiences might find this interesting?
- 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?
- 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 [findings!].
- Offer a claim (usually about how something works and what you found from studying it).

CONCLUSIONS

Strong Conclusions tend to...

- Restate your research question: Essentially, in this essay, I have been studying how language works in this community of teachers.
- 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.

- 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...

Strong Claims (thesis statements) tend to....

- Make an argument about how a particular thing (text, video, movie, speech, etc.) works.
- Include some tension. In other words, you don't want to argue something everyone already agrees with! Some ways to use tension include:
 - Although many people believe X, through studying Y, I have found M...
 - Despite the current research on Y, in my own study, I argue X...
 - Many critical race theorists have defined and explored concept Y; by exploring this comedienne's persona, I aim to extend Y by adding X.
 - My work supports research into X by adding an investigation into area Y. Although I have similar findings as John X, by looking at area Y, I further expand the site of investigation.
- Name important materials you're working with:
 - A key theory from a particular author;
 - Central text(s) you analyze;
 - Other materials (interviews, media, research studies, scholarship, stories, anecdotes, etc.)
- Offer a very specific explanation of what you've found. Yes, this usually means writing the paper and *then* coming back to your claim with a stronger sense of what you've found. When working with texts, "findings" often means describing how a particular feature of a text or a particular idea works. When describing, try to use specific descriptions, adjectives, and words that explain what's significant.
- Claim findings and arguments tend to be small, nuanced work. Don't feel like you need to make a completely new discovery or revelation in your claim! Rather, try to be focused and specific about what you do. Academic claims tend to be small steps, nuanced arguments!

OK-EXAMPLE CLAIM

Although many people believe that female comediennes of color only talk about race, through studying Jessica William's and Phoebe Robinson's podcast *2 Dope Queens*, I highlight their explicit attention to intersectionality in their comedy. Through their use of personal stories, they use comedy to highlight how gender, sexuality, class, and race intersect in ways that are oppressive and problematic.

Q. How do I know what my "findings" are? How do I make my claim more detailed?

1. Read through your essay and locate what you say about your evidence. Highlight it.
2. Hopefully, as you encounter new evidence, you find different and interesting things to say about how the evidence works. Notice how the evidence works across your body paragraphs.
3. Try to capture what you've highlighted in your thesis. Do you say one thing or three or four?