

General Guidelines for Introductions

1. The goal of the intro is to ease the reader into your argument; so usually, you want to start out general and narrow down to your specific, focused thesis. (*Use the "funnel" or "hourglass" model.*)
2. However, you do not want to start out too general; you want to begin with an idea that is clearly connected to your thesis. Otherwise, your essay might seem disjointed, like you are jumping around from idea to idea. Also, if your first sentence is too general, it might not be interesting enough to catch the reader's attention--start with a "grabber" that draws the reader into your paper.
3. Give the reader enough background into your subject (*whether it is a story, a novel, a poem, or an issue*), so that the reader has some idea where your arguments are coming from. On the other hand, do not give so much background that you bog the reader down with too much information. You usually need three to four sentences following the attention grabber in order to set up your context.
4. Another option for your intro: you can present the "other side" before going into your thesis. This technique is especially helpful on compare/contrast papers, since it shows that you are aware of counterarguments to your thesis. Your paper will thus seem more balanced and fair.
5. Finally, provide enough transitions in your intro so that your ideas are connected and flow smoothly into your thesis. (*see transitions sheet*)

Example of a Traditional Introduction:

In *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, mothers and daughters seek to understand one another better despite a cultural and generational divide. Four sets of mothers struggle to know their daughters; their goal is to communicate their Chinese culture and their personal history to them. One pair, in particular, struggles to communicate: Waverly Jong and her mother often disagree and struggle over who has control. Although their relationship can be viewed as a battleground of a chessboard, in reality they are very similar in their single-minded approaches to achieving their respective goals.

Does the above paragraph use the hourglass model or does it present the "other side"? Why?