



# STUDENT NOTES FOR SUCCESS

## No 16

### The power of introductions

An introduction gives your assignment direction. Good introductions must use clear and concise language. They are specific in outlining what you are going to do in your assignment.

#### Background

Generally, introductions are written in the third person. This means that the words 'I' or 'we' do not appear in the introduction or in the body of your assignment that follows.

Introductions begin broadly with background information on the subject you are about to cover in your assignment. This 'scene-setting' is necessary to introduce your reader to the subject matter and to the argument that follows. The introduction is also most important as it 'sets the tone' of your assignment.

The introduction should show your reader, particularly your lecturer/tutor:

- that you are going to answer the question
- how you will answer the question.

In broad terms you do this by:

- using words and phrases from the question
- indicating the main areas for discussion of your essay/report
- having a purposeful style (clear and direct)
- linking back to the question.

#### Guidelines for the reader

The introduction provides clear and concise guidelines for the reader. It indicates the subject to be discussed and how the essay or report proposes to do that. Readers then have an expectation of the material to follow. The writer has indicated what he or she will do and the reader will be looking to have these expectations met in the body and conclusion of the written work. Introductions, therefore, are very important, as they provide a map for the reader to follow. They clarify the question to be

answered for the reader and they give the writer a focus for writing.

#### Clarifying the Question

Sometimes, however, it is difficult to write a polished introduction when beginning your assignment. This is usually because you have not fully clarified the question for yourself or you have done lots of research but are finding it hard to get started. If you are having this sort of problem, it is good to clarify for yourself the main points required for your assignments and to jot these down in a logical order as a first draft of an introduction. You can then come back to this 'skeleton introduction' and polish it up later.



#### Key words

Circling or highlighting key words in your assignment question will help you research key information and focus your assignment. This process will also enable you to prepare a thesis statement, positioned at the end of your introduction, following the subject's general background. These key words should also appear in your introduction to show a direct connection with the question you are addressing.



### Tenses and language

Generally, introductions are written in the present tense, using the active voice. Write in the third person - do not use 'I' or 'we'.



Examples:

Instead of "In our opinion the tourism industry has suffered some severe losses", you would write, "In 2009 the tourism industry suffered some severe losses due to the economic downturn."

### Making connections

Your introduction must show cohesion by using well-chosen linking words, such as *however, therefore, consequently*. You can also repeat phrases or important nouns in order to connect the sentences to ensure flow of text and reader understanding.



Example:

It is generally accepted that the economic downturn in 2009 had a severe impact on the tourist industry. However, not all business areas suffered and some even managed to find niche opportunities.....

### Definitions

Definitions or business names must be written in full in your introduction (or wherever they are first mentioned).



Example:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) assists organisations to.....

### Answer the question

Above all, your introduction must be focussed and show your lecturer/tutor that you are going to answer the question. You do this by using key words from the assignment question to ensure the reader understands exactly what the assignment will discuss, examine, explain, analyse, or argue; and what framework you will use. Repeating major words of the question also lets the reader (usually the lecturer or tutor)

know that you as a writer are focussing on what the question requires.



Example of a good introduction:

Essay topic:

*What are the reasons for staffing problems within the hotel and catering industry in the UK? Suggest ways in which these might be overcome.*

Sample introduction:

*Despite the current economic recession and period of high unemployment, it has been estimated that two million new recruits will be needed by the hotel and catering industry over the next three years to address skill shortages and staff losses (Afiya 1992). Staffing in this industry has always been problematic. The hotel and catering industry suffers a poor image, with low pay, long hours and awkward shifts (Williams 1995). Inadequate training also poses a problem. Such factors continue to contribute to the problems experienced in the industry. This essay aims to analyse these problems and to suggest ways that they can be overcome.*

### In short

What does a good introduction need?

- Some lead-in sentences setting out the subject background,
- an explanation of the approach you will take in your essay, i.e. What you propose to discuss, examine or argue and how you will do it,
- any definitions, if needed, and clarification or interpretation of the question, as you see it, and
- clear and concise language with good connecting words.

### Adapted from

Williams, Ken. 1995, *Writing essays*. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

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<https://businesslaw.curtin.edu.au/study/student-experience/academic-communication-development/>

You might also be interested in *Handy Handout 17. Concluding Paragraphs*.

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