

# Writing Introductions

It may be helpful if you remember that the reader is the most important person in the essay writing process and this is reflected in the introduction which must provide the reader with an incentive to read the essay, a clear and detailed map of what is in the essay and a statement of the writer's position.

## Writing a good introduction

The four basic functions that a good introduction performs are:

- Engaging the reader's interest/providing background
- Indicating in general what the essay is about
- Indicating briefly the main ideas which dealt with in the essay
- Providing a thesis statement

**In addition some essay introductions contain a sentence which states any limitations on the scope of the essay.**

Read through the introduction which follows. Think about which sentences perform which of the four functions listed above.

## Sample Introduction 1

<sup>1</sup>Information technology is having significant effects on the communication of individual and organizations in different professions. <sup>2</sup>This essay will discuss the impact of information technology on the communication of health professionals. <sup>3</sup>**The essay will begin by discussing** how information technology provides for the educational needs of nurses. <sup>4</sup>**It will then explain** how information technology can have significant effects on the role of general practitioner in the area of public health. <sup>5</sup>**The essay will then turn to consider** the lack of knowledge about the potential of computers among hospital administrators and nursing executives. <sup>6</sup>**The final section will deal with** how information technology is assists health professionals in the delivery of services in rural areas. <sup>7</sup>*The essay will argue that information technology has significant potential to improve health care and medical education but health professionals are reluctant to use it.*

**Please note you should not use numbered sentences, bold or italics in an essay. They are used here only as teaching tools.**

In Introduction 1, Sentence 1 engages the reader's interest. Sentence 2 indicates the general topic area. Sentences 3-6 outline the main ideas. Sentence 7 gives the thesis statement. There is no sentence which limits the scope.

## Activity

Read through Introduction 2. As you read identify what functions the different sentences perform and decide for yourself how well the writer has succeeded in engaging the reader's interest, limiting the scope (if applicable), setting out the main ideas, and providing a thesis statement. Check your assessment against the feedback given underneath the introduction.

## Sample Introduction 2

<sup>1</sup>Popular representations of Australia like to portray it as the land of the “fair go”. <sup>2</sup>However “a fair go” has proved elusive for significant groups in Australian society. <sup>3</sup>This essay will examine inequality as experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. <sup>4</sup>Throughout Australia’s history, gender, access to education, unemployment and race have all been significant factors shaping inequality. <sup>5</sup>The discussion will be restricted to the factor of race. <sup>6</sup>After a brief look at nineteenth century ideologies of race I will present human rights as a more useful way to examine the relationship between race and inequality in Australia today. <sup>7</sup>The measure of inequality used in the paper is educational participation particularly as it relates to unemployment. <sup>8</sup>After examining the reasons for low rates of indigenous participation in education and the effects upon employment rates, I will briefly discuss other indicators of inequality such as income, housing and health status. <sup>9</sup>The essay will argue that race is still the most significant factor in causing inequality for indigenous people in Australia.

### Sentences: 1-2

Function: Introduces the reader to the topic/Engages the reader's interest

Comment: The writer draws the reader into the essay by referring to a popular myth that most Australians have heard about. Relating the essay to something the reader is likely to know about is a good way to start an essay.

### Sentence: 3

Function: Sets out the general topic area.

Comment: The writer lets the reader know that the general topic area is the factors which cause inequality for indigenous Australians.

### Sentences: 4-5

Function: Limits the scope of the essay.

Comment: Inequality is a very broad topic so the writer shows that she is aware of the different causes of inequality and then tells the reader which aspect will be dealt with in the essay.

### Sentences: 6-8

Function: Provides an indication of the main ideas and the order in which they will be addressed.

Comment: The main ideas are clearly set out and provide the reader with a good idea of what the body of the essay will contain.

### Sentence 9

Function: Provides a thesis statement.

Comment: The thesis statement is rather general. The author’s position could have been stated in a more focused way. For example:

*Institutionalised racism in the education system, even where it is not intended, continues to be the major cause of social disadvantage for indigenous people.*

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### Answers to Activity 1

In Introduction A, Sentence 1 engages the reader’s interest. Sentence 2 indicates the general topic area. Sentences 3-6 outline the main ideas. Sentence 7 gives the thesis statement. There is no sentence which limits the scope in this example.