

Introductions

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Why is the second introduction more successful than the first? Click on the *i*-icons to find out.

- i** In August 1883, Krakatoa volcano in Indonesia erupted. It was a big eruption, and many people died as a result.
- i** It had been rumbling and smoking for months, but no one expected such a violent explosion. Then, on August 27 and 28, 1883, a thunderous eruption blew the island apart and took the lives of more than 36,000 people. The eruption of Krakatoa, a volcanic island in Indonesia, was one of the most violent natural events ever witnessed by humans.



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- i** In August 1883, Krakatoa volcano in Indonesia erupted. It was a big eruption, and many people died as a result.



CLOSE

This introduction paints a picture of enormous destruction, creates suspense by waiting to identify the subject (Krakatoa), and engages readers' interest in learning more.

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This introduction is flat and uninteresting. It describes the event as a “big eruption” and says “many people died” without giving a number. There’s no suspense; readers are not engaged and have little reason to read on.

... in Indonesia erupted. It
... people died as a result.

... for months, but no one
... Then, on August 27 and
... blew the island apart and
... people. The eruption of
... nesia, was one of the most
... violent natural events ever witnessed by humans.

Introductions

A successful introduction

- captures the reader's interest
- communicates the topic and purpose



Introductions

You can use a variety of strategies to catch your reader's attention. Click on the strategy you want to explore.

MENU

- Lively Description
- Surprising Statements
- Quotations
- Questions
- Direct Address
- Strong Opinions
- Anecdote

Introductions

Lively Description

Sensory details and figurative language can add energy and interest to an introduction. Description can engage readers by painting a picture and establishing a mood.



Introductions

Lively Description

How could description be used to improve this introduction?

There was hardly any wind. It was a sunny day. Large clouds drifted across the sky, and now and then they obscured the sun. The prisoners had to work all day long in the field.



Introductions

Lively Description

The writer uses specific details to paint a vivid picture of the calm, peaceful scene, which contrasts subtly with the ominous introduction of prisoners.

Scarcely a breath of wind disturbed the stillness of the day, and the long rows of cabbages were bright green in the sunlight. Large white clouds drifted slowly across the deep blue sky. Now and then they obscured the sun and caused a chill on the backs of the prisoners who had to work all day long in the cabbage field.

—Bessie Head



Introductions

Surprising Statements

Grab a reader's attention by beginning with a surprising statement or a startling fact.



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Surprising Statements

Grab a reader's attention by beginning with a surprising statement or a startling fact.

Here are some examples:

- Although the birthday ditty, "Happy Birthday to You," was written in 1883, the copyright owner earns about \$2 million each year for use of the tune.
- Your body is creating and killing 15 million red blood cells each second.
- Did you know that, at birth, the human body has about 275 bones, but adults have only about 206 bones?



Introductions

Surprising Statements

A surprising statement or a startling fact can make your reader want to keep reading.



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Surprising Statements

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How does the first sentence grab your attention?

I love to work with dying children. They're so beautiful. Nobody knows what pearls they are. They have all the wisdom in the world. They know that they are dying. They know how and when they are dying. They teach you all about life if you can hear, if you can listen to them.

—Elisabeth Kübler-Ross



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CLOSE

It is surprising that anyone would love to work with dying children. It seems like such a sad and depressing experience.

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Introductions

Quotations

Including a quotation can lend impact and authority to an introduction.



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How would a quotation give this idea more impact?

My friends and I get frustrated by all the problems we see in the world. We need to get a good education so we can fix them.



Introductions

Quotations

Including a quotation can lend impact and authority to an introduction.

Nelson Mandela is a South African statesman.

Many of my high school friends are frustrated, and I understand that. I look around and see all kinds of problems in the world, and it doesn't seem like anything will ever change. When I feel like that, I think about Nelson Mandela's struggles, and I remember his claim that **“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”** For me, the next few years will be my chance to get an education, because I am going to change the world.



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Questions

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- Does the melting of the polar ice caps mean that, in 30 years, New York City will be under water?
- If the International Space Station produces so little of scientific value, why do scientists still support this mission?
- If you eat like a bird and are still gaining weight, could it be you're getting extra calories while you sleep?



Introductions

Questions

How does this question make you want to keep reading?

Do you think you know what art is? An artist takes plain house paint, punches a hole in the can, and dribbles the paint on a canvas. **Is that art?** Famed American painter Jackson Pollock used just that technique, and art experts around the world call him one of the great painters of the last one-hundred years.

Click to see an answer



Introductions

Questions

In this case, the writer challenges the reader by asking simple yes or no questions. Revealing that the technique is used by a famous painter encourages curious readers to learn more.

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Direct Address

Address readers directly to immediately involve them in what you have written.



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How does this introduction involve readers?

If you've ever wondered how to avoid using pesticides in your garden, you can find answers from Natural Gardens, Inc. It's easy to protect the environment and have pest-free plants.



Introductions

Direct Address

Address readers directly to immediately involve them in what you have written.

Using “you’ve,” “your” and “you” helps readers understand that they can do something about this problem.

If **you’ve** ever wondered how to avoid using pesticides in **your** garden, **you** can find answers from Natural Gardens, Inc. It’s easy to protect the environment and have pest-free plants.



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Strong Opinions

Beginning with a strong opinion is likely to get your readers' attention because it might challenge their beliefs.



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How could this introduction to a persuasive essay be made more compelling?

Two years ago, our school district stopped funding the district's magnet school for the arts.



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Strong Opinions

Beginning with a strong opinion is likely to get your readers' attention because it might challenge their beliefs.

In this revised introduction, the writer starts with a strong **statement of opinion** and then **elaborates** on the experience.

It's time to restart our school district's magnet school for the arts. Two years ago, our district stopped funding this program. The school board called it a "short-term response" to a "temporary financial short-fall." Now the opportunity to make an intense study of the arts is slipping away from many students. The district needs to find the money and bring this program back!



Introductions

Anecdote

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An anecdote is an interesting or amusing brief story, often about a person.

What kind of anecdote could make this introduction more interesting?

None of us ever thought there was any place in the world like that lake in Maine. We returned summer after summer—always on August 1 for one month.



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Anecdote

An anecdote is an interesting or amusing brief story, often about a person.

These brief examples are easy for readers to imagine.

One summer, along about 1904, my father rented a camp on a lake in Maine and took us all there for the month of August. We all got ringworm from some kittens and had to rub Pond's Extract on our arms and legs night and morning, and my father rolled over in the canoe with all his clothes on; but outside of that the vacation was a success and from then on none of us ever thought there was any place in the world like that lake in Maine. We returned summer after summer—always on August 1 for one month.

—E. B. White, "Once More to the Lake"

