



Writing an Introduction

An introduction is the first paragraph or first section of your text, which sets up the focus for your reader. An effective introduction is valuable because it orients your reader to the overall focus, while also providing context and significance.

An introduction answers the following questions:

- What is the topic of your paper?
- What background information does your reader need to understand the context of the topic?
- What makes this topic significant to your reader?
- What is the thesis of your paper?

Common errors in introductions:

No background information about the issue or topic:

Is tuition fair? Texas Tech should consider letting students find more creative ways to pay for their tuition in 2021, similar to the way students used to pay for tuition through ice cream.

To establish an answer to the opening question, you could consider comparing the cost of tuition in the 1960s, when students were allowed to pay for tuition with dairy products, to the current cost of tuition. A few sentences about when and why Tech began accepting dairy products as tuition payment would help historically situate the discussion so your reader can follow what is going on.

An introduction that is too general for readers:

Back in history, Texas Tech students used to pay their tuition with cows or cows' milk. That is far different from today's tuition payment. Is tuition then and now fair? Surely, there must be creative ways to pay for school today.

This introduction leads into several different topics, including an historical practice, current practices, a question about whether tuition is fair, and creative ways to pay for school. These broad topics do not give your reader a clear indication of what to focus on, nor do they communicate your purpose for writing.



No thesis statement:

Texas Tech students used to pay their tuition with cows or cows' milk. That is far different from today's tuition payment. Is tuition then and now fair? What are some different ways students could finance their education?

This introduction states facts and asks questions, but it does not establish an arguable position on a narrowed topic, which is the primary purpose of your thesis.

An effective introduction:

Texas Tech has recently remodeled its historic dairy barn so that students, faculty, and staff can use it as a common space to meet. In the 1960s, the barn was used to house cows that agriculture students brought to campus. These cows provided milk and ice cream that students could sell to the cafeteria to help fund their education. Costs of tuition have risen substantially since that time, and there is a stark disparity between this practice and the load of student debt incurred by present day students. The average cost of tuition at Texas Tech University was \$152 in 1964, compared to \$11,600 now. Texas Tech administrators need to start a conversation with students to come up with practical solutions to offset tuition costs.