

Introduction and Thesis Statement Notes

Imagine that you bring a new friend to a party. He doesn't know anyone there except you. You wouldn't just plant him in the middle of the party, surrounded by strangers and go off to eat cake and drink soda with your other friends! You would introduce him to your friends, tell him a little about them, and explain the purpose of the party. This is what you do for the reader in your introduction. You tell the reader a little about your topic (the introduction) and then let him know why you're writing about it (the thesis statement).

Some ways to start your introduction:

1. A definition: Your topic may rely on a new or specialized definition of a word or phrase. A definition may be a way to start off your introduction. Try as much as possible to write the definition in your own words, without just copying it from the dictionary or another source.
Cheese is a food made from milk that is blended with flavorings and then cured over a long period of time.
2. An interesting quotation: Make sure it's interesting and related to your topic. It doesn't necessarily have to be from a famous person. If you were writing about the importance of saving money, you might want to start with:
Ben Franklin said, "A penny saved is a penny earned." I've been saving my pennies for years and now I have enough to buy a house....
3. A general statement about the overall topic of your essay. It could be an interesting fact or just a personal observation or opinion about the topic. Make sure it has something to do with the topic!
*A lot of cheese is made in Wisconsin.
Many people really enjoy eating cheese.
I love to eat all kinds of cheese.*

Thesis Statements

1. Your thesis statement should be a sentence. It may be expressed in more than one sentence, but the point is, it should not be a phrase or a title. It also should be a statement, not a question. Suppose you were writing an informative essay about how animals protect themselves. You would not want either of the following examples as a thesis statement:

*Ways that animals protect themselves.
How animals protect themselves.*

These sound more like titles and should not be used as thesis statements within the introduction of a composition.

2. Your thesis statement should not sound like an announcement:
In this essay I will talk about the causes of the Civil War.

Don't simply tell your reader the topic of your essay; instead, tell him your specific idea about the topic:
The causes of the Civil War were disputes over states' rights, slavery, and the direction of the American economy.

In the example above, the writer has made a clear, strong statement about the causes of the Civil War. He's also helped himself write the essay by narrowing down the causes to three. His essay will give facts and details that support these as the causes of the war.