**Guidelines for Creating Strong Introductions**

**Purpose of the Introduction**
The introduction is the writer's way of orienting the reader to the topics and issues that are about to be discussed in the body of the essay. The introduction allows the writer to clearly familiarize the reader with the contexts surrounding the topic that will be presented in the writing. Ideally, the introduction also allows the writer to begin to move the reader in a direction of thought that is both supportive and accepting of the position s/he wishes to advance in the essay.

**Steps of an Introduction:** Generally, the introduction occurs in the following 3 parts:

a) **Broad Opening, Attention-Getting Statement**
   - Strong Introductions will usually start with a broad opening statement that is relatively neutral and engages the reader’s interest.
   - These opening statements should usually make a claim that most people can agree with.
   - The purpose of this claim is twofold: to catch the reader's attention and to avoid alienating the reader.
   - A good example of a broad opening statement would be “Everybody has the right to be happy.”
   - After the opening statement, the writing moves towards the topic of the paper.

b) **Background Information**
   - After the writer has captured the reader's attention and slowly brought her/him towards the context surrounding the topic of the essay, the writer should begin to reveal what position s/he will take in the paper.
   - A good way to set the stage and prepare the reader for the claim that will be made in the thesis statement is to provide some factual background information about the topic.
   - If the paper is arguing a certain position, after providing the background information, it is often helpful to provide a general overview of the opposition’s position on the topic.
   - The background information in the introduction should be limited to the "big picture"; specifics will occur in the body paragraphs and are not necessary in the introduction.

c) **Thesis Statement**
   - The thesis statement usually occurs near or at the end of the introduction and serves:
     - To announce the topic to the reader
     - To state a position and/or make a claim about the topic
     - To provide the reader with a blueprint for what is to come in the paper

**Diagram of an Introduction**

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a) Broad Opening, Attention Getting Statement
    b) Background Information
        c) Thesis Statement
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Sample Introduction

Opening: Welfare was created during the Great Depression to address a rampant epidemic of poverty in the United States. Background: Thousands upon thousands of people could not find work and were starving and the government stepped in to provide assistance. Until poverty is completely eradicated in this country, welfare must stay in place. But an unfortunate by-product of this initially philanthropic institution is generational dependency on the “dole,” which strips the nation’s poor of respect and empowerment and in turn engenders resentment in tax paying citizens. Thesis Statement: In order to keep the welfare system alive and healthy, it must incorporate time limits, more job training programs and incentives to encourage recipients to move beyond the system.

Guidelines for Creating Strong Conclusions

Purpose of the Conclusion:
The conclusion is the writer’s way of summing up the main purpose of the essay and reviewing the relevant issues that were discussed in the body of the essay for the reader. The conclusion allows the writer to remind the reader of the most important concepts relating to the issue under discussion and to demonstrate their interconnectedness. This, in turn, allows the reader to see the “big picture” as it relates to the topic being addressed.

Steps of a Conclusion: By and large, the conclusion occurs in the following 3 parts:

a) A return to the big picture
   • Strong Conclusions will usually start by restating the general/big picture idea of the essay, thereby reminding the reader of the ideas that have been argued and demonstrated in the previous body paragraphs.

b) Summary of relevant points
   • After restating the main claim of the composition, the author should summarize the main points of the essay, so the reader can see the relationship between the initial claim and the evidence provided in the essay.
   • A good way to summarize the relevant points is to provide 1 or 2 strong sentences that assert the facts/details of each of the preceding body paragraphs.

c) Learning Statement
   • The “learning statement” occurs at the broadest part of the conclusion.
   • In the “learning statement,” the author offers the reader some of the insights that s/he has learned and/or insights that s/he hopes the reader has become aware of as a result of the composition.
   • There is no exact formula for the “learning statement,” but it usually reflects one of the following categories:
     o Statement of a new view
     o Hope for the future
     o Suggestion for change
     o Suggestion for future research
**Sample Conclusion**

**Return to the Big Picture:** To eliminate welfare would be to deny an essential part of our nation’s ideology, that of offering sanctuary to all in the world who may need it, and it would actually create even more problems in the society. **Summary of Relevant Points:** Homelessness and crime would rise as the desperate poor try to survive. Welfare should offer incentives to encourage people toward self-sufficiency and to discourage people from taking advantage of the system. A program with time limits should be adopted in order to obliterate the possibility of generational welfare as children watch their parents work towards these goals and have a model to follow. **Learning Statement:** Welfare must stay in place and reforms must be made to the system before the stress between the recipients and contributors causes the system to break altogether, creating a situation reminiscent of the Great Depression.