



# Introductions

Introductions are the way you gently but firmly lead your reader into your world. You help him see why he should care about what you have to say. Anything that gently but firmly does this is an introduction strategy. However, if you are stuck, try one of these common strategies. Don't think you have to start by writing your introduction, though. It may be easier to first write a working thesis and draft your body paragraphs. As you write, one of these strategies may start to stand out to you. For instance, sometimes your supporting evidence includes examples from your personal life that could make a short-short introductory story (Illustrate). Or you may come across a surprising statistic that you could lead with (Surprise us). Try one of these:

Intro strategy	Example	Why you might like it	☛ Watch out!
Question	<p>“What if Shakespeare had it wrong about love in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>” (Trees)?</p> <p>Does asking for voter identification at the polls violate citizens’ constitutional rights, and if so—which ones?</p> <p>Should juvenile offenders ever be tried and sentenced as adults?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) It’s convenient. Writing prompts often pose questions you can borrow or adapt to create a hook.</li> <li>2) Your paper probably answers an inquiry question anyway—just ask the question up front.</li> </ol>	<p>☛ A question is NOT a thesis statement. A thesis statement is the <i>answer</i> to a question.</p>
Illustrate	<p>“When I was young, my parents took our family to Haiti during the summers. For them, it was a homecoming. For my brothers and me it was an adventure, sometimes a chore, and always a necessary education on privilege and the grace of an American passport” (Gay 15).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A short-short story (anecdote) is visual. It easily engages the imagination</li> <li>2) You can use events from your own experience.</li> <li>3) You can tell about a recent event. Read newspapers and magazines.</li> <li>4) You can tell a story from other culture, country, or time. Think of your history class, family stories, or books you’ve read.</li> </ol>	<p>☛ An anecdote—a short-short story—is <i>short</i>. Keep it short and make sure it connects to your claim.</p>
Surprise us	<p>Sixty-five percent of entering community college freshmen cannot fluently read college level materials.</p> <p>My elementary and high school education was a waste of time.</p> <p>I was a functionally illiterate college freshman.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) You might’ve found one or two surprising facts in your research. Share one. Get us interested.</li> <li>2) You might start by saying something slightly blunt or non-PC.</li> <li>3) If you are making an unexpected or unusual claim, start there. Then back up and explain a bit.</li> <li>4)</li> </ol>	<p>☛ If you’re going to go for blunt, be careful! Don’t be offensive. It’s a big, big world out there, and we all share it. So no name-calling!</p>

Define something	A bigot is “one who regards or treats the members of a group with hatred and intolerance” (Merriam-Webster). A bigot is a small person who has chosen a narrow, claustrophobic vision of the world.  Ambrose Bierce defines a bigot as “one who is obstinately and zealously attached to an opinion that you do not entertain.”	1) Use the dictionary on your phone, but then give it your personal spin. What does it mean to <i>you</i> ? 2) Use the browser on your phone to find unusual definitions, as in <i>The Devil’s Dictionary</i> by Ambrose Bierce.	☹️ Nobody really cares what the Merriam-Webster dictionary says. Only use a standard dictionary definition if you plan to subvert it in some way.
Quote someone	Mark Twain famously said there were three kinds of lies—lies, damned lies, and statistics. The governor’s claims about the bullet train project are all three.  “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.” Yeats was describing the chaotic post-World War I world, but his lines always remind me of the terrible months after my brother’s suicide.	1) Quoteland, Brainyquote—there’s a big wide world of quotes out there on every topic imaginable. 2) You listen to music. You can probably already quote some lyrics. 3) Think back to your literature class for a few lines from a poem that make your point.	☹️ You can’t just plop a quote down and let it speak for itself—you have to connect it to your point. Use a quote sandwich. ☹️ Not all lyrics are decent enough for academic writing, and some are cliché. Make good choices.
Make a comparison	Sometimes it seems that <i>technology</i> is evolving <i>like a virus</i> —very rapidly, favoring its own most aggressive and adaptable components, and locked in competition with human needs. If we’re not careful, it might kill us.	1) If your mind finds analogies everywhere, this is for you. What historical event, cultural quandary, family relationship, or mechanical process can you compare it to? 2) It evokes familiarity (if you pick something likely to be familiar to your readers).	☹️ Avoid clichés. We’ve heard “like a needle in a haystack” and lots of other corny comparisons before.
Make a contrast	“In the Orwellian world of many college and university campuses, all faiths are welcome — but some faiths are more welcome than others” (Haynes).	1) It’s like comparison, only different. 2) It creates tension and raises reader expectations.	☹️ If you <i>create</i> tension and raise expectations, you have to <i>resolve</i> the tension and meet expectations.

Soon after your introduction, assert your main point. Don’t *say* you’re going to assert it; just assert it:

~~*In this paper I am going to explain why*~~ or ~~*In my opinion*~~ *Walmart is doing more harm than good in communities all across America.*

#### Works Cited

- Gay, Roxanne. “Peculiar Benefits.” *Bad Feminist: Essays*. New York: Harper Collins, 2014.
- Haynes, Charles C. “Welcome to college, where religious freedom goes to die.” *The Pocono Record*. 27 Sept. 2014.
- Trees, Andrew. “‘Romeo and Juliet’ has led us astray.” *The Los Angeles Times*. Feb. 14, 2010.

*Contributed by Rosemary McKeever*



This Yuba College Writing & Language Development Center Tip Sheet is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>