**Writing an introduction**

Introductions are important. They arouse a reader's interest, introduce the subject, and tackle the *So what?* factor. In short, they're your paper's "first impression." But you don't have to write them first. In fact, many students prefer launching right into the body of the essay before they tackle intros and conclusions. However, other students prefer writing the introduction first to help "set up" what's to follow.

Whatever your style, you'll probably put your thesis/question somewhere near the end of the paragraph and some important background information directly before. But that still leaves the very beginning. Contrary to what you may have been taught, intros don't have to begin with a "general statement." So what are some different ways to start that first sentence?

Begin with a quotation. Just make sure you explain its relevance

Begin with a question

Begin with an acknowledgment of an opinion opposite to the one you plan to take

Begin with a very short narrative or anecdote that has a direct bearing on your paper

Begin with an interesting fact

Begin with a definition or explanation of a term relevant to your paper

Begin with irony or paradox

Begin with an analogy. Make sure it's original but not too far-fetched

An introduction should generally be four to five sentences long. Begin your introduction

with a general statement, and with each sentence that follows get more and more specific

until you get to the last sentence, which is a clearly stated thesis. This thesis states the point

of your paper. The thesis should be like an umbrella which spans your essay, including all

major points found in the essay.

In a speech comparing two Robert Frost poems, the introduction could be written as follows:

**General sentence:** Dealing with emotional issues can be both complicated and perplexing.

**Less general sentence:** Now and then, a poet is willing to expose two very distinct facets of his or her emotional nature.

**Even less general:** Such a poet is courageous enough to look back on

**(more specific)** sadder times, as well as to recollect a fond memory--a writer honest enough to know that life includes both the swing of birches and the darker moments of the soul.

**Even more specific:** Robert Frost is such a poet.

**Specific thesis sentence:** The difference in the tone of his poems "Birches" and "Acquainted With the Night" reveals a poet equally adept at portraying both the lighter and darker sides in life through his use of setting, imagery and structure.

The first statement suggests the subject of emotional issues. The next two statements refrain from talking about the specific person, but let the reader know that we are talking about a poet dealing with emotional issues. The third sentence introduces the poet, and once the poet is introduced, the writer is ready for the thesis statement. The thesis statement lists three topics for discussion. As you write the body of your paper, follow these topics in the order listed in the thesis statement.