

Aula 3

THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH (I)

META

This class aims at developing the introductory paragraph of an essay.

OBJETIVOS

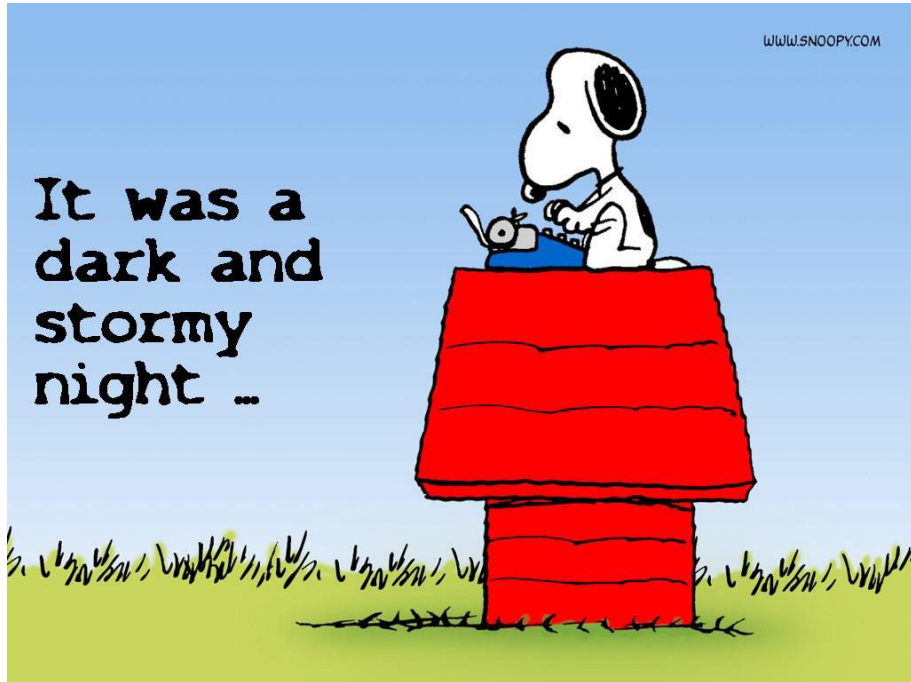
At the end of this class, it is expected that the students:
Identify background statement, thesis statement and outline statement;
Improve their knowledge about introduction of an essay;
Understand the do's and don'ts related to the introduction.

PRÉ-REQUISITOS

Previous knowledge about paragraph structure and essay.

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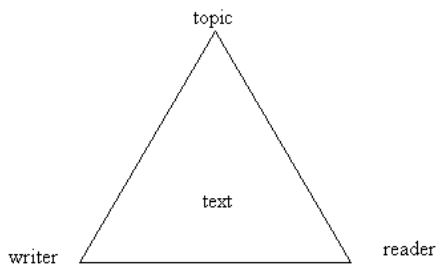
INTRODUÇÃO



Source: <http://www.bestsellingreads.com>

Welcome to Class 3! It's time to learn how to start your essay: the introduction. Feared by many, the introduction plays a pivotal role in getting the attention of your reader as it lays the foundation for what you are going to state in your essay.

In this respect, you have to set the context (background statement); then, state why the main idea is important (thesis statement); lastly, state your thesis (outline statement). These are the three key features of your introduction. Thus, let's see them in great detail!



The Communication Triangle

Source: <https://uwaterloo.ca>

The introduction is the broad beginning of the paper that answers three important questions:

1. What is this?
2. Why am I reading it?
3. What do you want me to do?

You should answer these questions by doing the following:

1. Set the context –provide general information about the main idea, explaining the situation so the reader can make sense of the topic and the claims you make and support
2. State why the main idea is important –tell the reader why he or she should care and keep reading. Your goal is to create a compelling, clear, and convincing essay people will want to read and act upon
3. State your thesis/claim –compose a sentence or two stating the position you will support with **logos** (sound reasoning: induction, deduction), **pathos** (balanced emotional appeal), and **ethos** (author credibility).

For exploratory essays, your primary research question would replace your thesis statement so that the audience understands why you began your inquiry. An overview of the types of sources you explored might follow your research question.

If your argument paper is long, you may want to forecast how you will support your thesis by outlining the structure of your paper, the sources you will consider, and the opposition to your position. You can forecast your paper in many different ways depending on the type of paper you are writing. Your forecast could read something like this:

First, I will define key terms for my argument, and then I will provide some background of the situation. Next I will outline the important positions of the argument and explain why I support one of these positions. Lastly, I will consider opposing positions and discuss why these positions are outdated. I will conclude with some ideas for taking action and possible directions for future research.

When writing a research paper, you may need to use a more formal, less personal tone. Your forecast might read like this:

This paper begins by providing key terms for the argument before providing background of the situation. Next, important positions are outlined and supported. To provide a more thorough explanation of these important positions, opposing positions are discussed. The

paper concludes with some ideas for taking action and possible directions for future research.

THESIS CHECKLIST

Your thesis is more than a general statement about your main idea. It needs to establish a clear position you will support with balanced proofs (logos, pathos, ethos). Use the checklist below to help you create a thesis.

This section is adapted from *Writing with a Thesis: A Rhetoric Reader* by David Skwire and Sarah Skwire:

Make sure you avoid the following when creating your thesis:

- A thesis is not a title: Homes and schools (title) vs. Parents ought to participate more in the education of their children (good thesis).
- A thesis is not an announcement of the subject: My subject is the incompetence of the Supreme Court vs. The Supreme Court made a mistake when it ruled in favor of George W. Bush in the 2000 election.
- A thesis is not a statement of absolute fact: Jane Austen is the author of *Pride and Prejudice*.
- A thesis is not the whole essay: A thesis is your main idea/claim/refutation/problem-solution expressed in a single sentence or a combination of sentences.
- *Please note* that according to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Seventh Edition, "A thesis statement is a single sentence that formulates both your topic and your point of view" (Gibaldi 42). However, if your paper is more complex and requires a thesis statement, your thesis may require a combination of sentences.

Make sure you follow these guidelines when creating your thesis:

- A good thesis is unified:
 - o NOT: Detective stories are not a high form of literature, but people have always been fascinated by them, and many fine writers have experimented with them.
 - o BETTER: Detective stories appeal to the basic human desire for thrills (concise).
- A good thesis is specific:
 - o NOT: James Joyce's *Ulysses* is very good. vs.
 - o BETTER: James Joyce's *Ulysses* helped create a new way for writers to deal with the unconscious.
- Try to be as specific as possible (without providing too much detail) when creating your thesis:

- o NOT: James Joyce's *Ulysses* helped create a new way for writers to deal with the unconscious. vs.
- o BETTER: James Joyce's *Ulysses* helped create a new way for writers to deal with the unconscious by utilizing the findings of Freudian psychology and introducing the techniques of literary stream-of-consciousness.

QUICK CHECKLIST

- _____ The thesis/claim follows the guidelines outlined above
- _____ The thesis/claim matches the requirements and goals of the assignment
- _____ The thesis/claim is clear and easily recognizable
- _____ The thesis/claim seems supportable by good reasoning/data, emotional appeal

Source: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/2/60/>

PRACTICE I

Read the following examples and decide which meet the criteria for a good introduction.

Example 1

Stereotypes are everywhere: the reserved British, the disorganised Italians, the shopping-obsessed Japanese. This essay will talk about these stereotypes and ask if they are true. It is going to look at the different types of stereotypes and their representation in the media. The following areas will be covered: television; radio; the press, and the cinema. I will particularly look at television and ask the question "Does television reinforce these stereotypes?"

Your comments:

Example 2

Stereotypes abound in today's society. People seem to have an innate compulsion to categorise others into various groups and then to apply rigid and limited descriptions to these groups. There are therefore, amongst others, stereotypical nationalities and races; stereotypical sexes and sexual orientations and stereotypical classes. And one place where these stereotypes often thrive is in the mass media, particularly in the tabloid press and popular television, such as in situation comedy. Some, for example Hick (1996), claim that this is a harmless phenomenon, whereas commentators such as Ealham (1998) point to the possible dangers of obsessive stereotyping in the media. This essay will examine what sociological evidence

there is for the process of stereotyping in the mass media, and will then go on to analyse the reasons for its occurrence. The final part of the essay will ask how far society's attitudes are in fact shaped by this portrayal of the various kinds of stereotypes.

Your comments:

Example 3

As we all know, Britain is a multicultural society. In the 1960s many thousands of immigrants came to the country, mostly setting up home in the major cities. The majority of these immigrants came from the West Indies, India and Pakistan and Hong Kong. Racism has always been a problem, with the various groups of immigrants seen as stereotypes, although over the years there has been increasing integration into British society, particularly by the children of immigrant families. This is reflected in the mass media. Twenty years ago black people were rarely seen on television and very few held jobs in the press. However, nowadays, more and more black people work as journalists and are thus able to look at events from a different perspective.

Your comments:

LET'S SEE IF YOUR COMMENTS ARE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:

Introduction 1

Too short for a start, and not very well written (inconsistency of tenses: will/going to) No attempt to put the question into some sort of context, to get the reader interested in what's to come. At first, it looks as if stereotypes are being interpreted simply as national stereotypes and also the writer goes off on the wrong tack: the question does not ask for a simple description nor asks about the validity of these stereotypes. The last part of the introduction, however, does indicate that the last part of the question will be addressed. If the writer manages to focus more on the actual question, the essay might just scrape a pass.

Introduction 2

This is a very good introduction. It's about the right length (c8%); gives a little relevant background and context, indicating that the writer has thought about what a stereotype is in its broadest interpretation; makes some initial references to sources; and finally focuses precisely on the question, showing the reader that it has been fully understood and that it will be answered. Note that the wording of the final part of the introduction is

very close to that of the question. If the essay follows in the same vein, it should get an excellent mark.

Introduction 3

Your tutor would read an introduction like this with a great sense of foreboding. There's no real problem with the actual English, but the writer shows no indication whatsoever of answering the question. The word 'stereotype' has been picked up on, and narrowly interpreted as meaning racial stereotype. But even then there is no attempt to focus on the actual question, and most of what is said is irrelevant. Probably a fail.

Source: <http://library.bcu.ac.uk/learner>

An introduction should tell your reader exactly what your paper is about and how it is structured.

Introductions are usually 5-10% of the length of an a typical essay. Readers gain their first impressions of a paper from this section, so an effective introduction is vital.

Generally, introductions begin with some brief **background** or **contextual information** that provides a focus for your paper.

This should be followed by a clear articulation of your controlling argument or point of view - a sentence that is sometimes called a **thesis statement**. The thesis statement must directly and clearly respond to the set question or topic and can sometimes be indicated by phrases such as; "This paper will argue that ..." or "This essay will advance the idea that ..."

Next, an **overview** of **how** you will support your argument should be presented, with a clear preview of the order in which you will proceed; this process can be indicated by such phrases as "In order to explore these issues, this paper will first..."; "This will be followed by ..."; "The paper will conclude with..." etc.

The introduction should also clarify how you intend to **interpret** or **limit** the question. You may also need to **define key terms**, or theoretical approaches.

Do not 'pad' your introduction with too much detail or references from other sources, rather, relate this section *directly* to the set question or topic. It can be useful to incorporate some of the actual words of the question into your introduction.

The introduction should tell your reader:

- How you understand the topic (e.g. context, background, key terms)
- What your controlling argument is
- What issues you will cover (and in which order)
- Highlight ideas as major or minor (for longer essays)
- What conclusion you will reach

Source: <http://services.unimelb.edu.au>

Writing an essay is not like writing a mystery novel with an unfolding plot. Aim to be transparent and direct. Your reader should not have to read several pages before finding out what your argument or thesis is; it needs to be in the introduction.

Following is an example of an introduction with its key aspects identified in the text boxes.

Question (from Arts): *To what extent can the American Revolution be understood as a revolution 'from below'? Why did working people become involved and with what aims in mind?*

Historians generally concentrate on the twenty year period between 1763 and 1783 as the period which constitutes the American Revolution. However, when considering the involvement of working people, or people from below, in the revolution it is important to make a distinction between the pre-revolutionary period 1763-1774 and the revolution of 1774- 1788 , marked by the establishment of the continental Congress (1). This paper will argue that the nature and aims of the actions of working people are difficult to assess as it changed according to each phase. The pre-revolutionary period was characterised by opposition to Britain's authority. During this period the aims and actions of the working people were more conservative as they responded to grievances related to taxes and scarce land, issues which directly affected them. However, examination of activities such as the organisation of crowd action and town meetings, pamphlet writing, formal communications to Britain of American grievances and physical action in the streets, demonstrates that their aims and actions became more revolutionary after 1775.

Sets general context of the period

How the key term 'from below' is interpreted

Thesis statement or statement of argument

Indication of conclusion

Elaboration on content of essay

PRACTICE II - SENTENCE TYPES IN INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPHS

Read the following question and the sample introduction paragraph. The sentences are in the wrong order for an introduction paragraph. Match the statements to the correct sentence type.

Some students who enrol in university studies have difficulties with their writing skills. Discuss the reasons for this problem and critically assess the effectiveness of university intervention writing programs.

1. Because poor writing skills can affect students' success in tertiary education, it is important that writing problems are understood so that university assistance programs are adequate.

- a) Background statement
- b) Thesis statement
- c) Outline statement

2. This essay will identify and examine the main causes underpinning student difficulties with academic writing and consider evidence to evaluate whether programs delivered in universities address this problem.

- a) Background statement
- b) Thesis statement
- c) Outline statement

3. Assignment essays are frequently used as assessment tasks to involve students in research, academic reading and formal essay writing.

- a) Background statement
- b) Thesis statement
- c) Outline statement

Source: <http://learninghub.une.edu.au>

WEB SEARCH

Access the website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rl3O6DMsJgI>
Discuss with your colleagues the analogies presented in the video. Do you agree with them? Have you ever thought of them before?



SUMMARY

The introduction is considered demanding because is responsible for getting the attention of your reader as well as it lays the foundation for your essay.

Moreover, it usually has some background information on the topic, which requires some previous knowledge on it. However, it does not demand too many details, which can be helpful so that you can organise your ideas in the following paragraphs.

This is why we will read more and discuss the introductory paragraph in the next class as well as you will write an introduction to an essay.



SELF-EVALUATION

Did I increase my knowledge related to introductory paragraph?

Am I able to identify background statement, thesis statement and outline statement?



NEXT CLASS

Next class, we will continue to study *Introductory Paragraph*. See ya ;)

REFERENCES

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