

How to Write an Introductory Paragraph in a Social Science Essay

Not every social science essay or research paper is the same. However, there are certain guidelines that might help to get you started!

The introduction to an essay is often described as a funnel: the paragraph might open with a broad, general statement, and eventually become narrower and narrower until you reach the narrowest point, which is the thesis. Below are some general elements that lend themselves to a smooth Introduction.

Note: sometimes an introduction requires only one paragraph, and sometimes it might require several. Although a solid Introduction might contain at least one sentence capturing each of these elements, you are not restricted to one sentence each. Depending on the length of the assignment or the complexity of the topic, these elements might require multiple sentences or even full paragraphs to communicate what they need to. However, be sure not to waste space on unnecessary details. Every sentence must have a clear purpose.

Elements of an Introduction	What it's for	Example
Opening statement(s)	The opening statement of an Introduction is general, factual, and unarguable: this is a statement that most people will be able to agree upon. Your purpose here is not to say something controversial or requiring proof—that comes later.	When Patient Zero first contracted the novel coronavirus in November 2019, no one could have predicted the shockwaves this event would generate across the globe.
Transitional statement(s)	This is where you transition from your general opener into the more specific topic of your paper. Note: be sure to provide citations if you are sharing someone else's ideas. Because this example sentence includes "many Canadians feel," it would be best to find a source and cite this.	However, despite the serious consequences of this event, many Canadians feel that the federal government's response has been inadequate in recognizing the needs of Canada's sexual minorities (author, year).

Essay topic	This is where you present the <i>topic</i> of your paper. Note that this is not your thesis statement—rather, this is where you share with the audience what this paper will be about, not what you are attempting to argue.	This paper explores how the Canadian government’s pandemic response has impacted the needs of queer communities across Canada.
Arguments or methods	This is where you list out the main arguments you intend to make to support your thesis. It is like a roadmap for the rest of the paper. In general, social sciences permit the use of the first-person pronoun when writing papers.	To do this, I will first examine the COVID-19 infection and death rates among queer communities in Canada. Secondly, I will explore the use and availability of the CERB system to members of queer communities. Finally, I will review public opinion pieces on how queer communities represent their own needs considering the pandemic and continued lockdowns.
Thesis statement	This is the crux of the paper: After narrowing and narrowing your topic, this statement is the position you are taking and the point you are attempting to prove.	Based on these findings, I argue that the Trudeau government’s policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic has failed to address the needs of Canada’s queer communities, and has only served to heighten pre-existing social inequalities throughout Canada.”