Types of Essay Introductions

1. **A general statement.** Begin with a general statement and then follow it with more particular or specific statements leading to your thesis statement. This introductory strategy is sometimes referred to as a **funnel introduction** because, like a funnel, it is broad at the opening and narrow at the bottom.

**The issue of whether we should allow marine parks to stay open has been widely debated in our community recently. It is an important issue because it concerns fundamental moral and economic questions about the way we use our native wildlife. A variety of different arguments have been put forward about this issue**, but considering arguments for having marine parks and pointing to some of the problems with these parks, it is not difficult to understand our legislation should introduce laws which prohibit these unnecessary and cruel institutions.

1. **A Question.** Many writers open their essays with a question that is meant to attract the interest of the reader. Sometimes writers use a *rhetorical question*; that is, a question for which no answer is expected because the intended answer is obvious. An example of a rhetorical question: “Should we allow child abuse to continue?” A writer might open an essay with a question that requires an answer; the need to hear the answer keeps the reader reading.

When people think ahead to the year 2050, many different questions come to mind. **Does germ warfare have the potential to destroy the world? Does the medical profession have the knowledge and technology to make gene therapy a natural part of medical care? Will the cloning of humans be successfully accomplished in the next few years?** If the answer to all these questions is yes, then it is only logical that in the next fifty years people will experience major differences in medicine, lifestyles, and living environments.

1. **An Anecdote or Brief Story**. Many people enjoy stories. For most, reading about real people in real situations is far more convincing and interesting than reading about general ideas. For that reason, opening an essay with a short description of a person, place, or event can be an effective way to grab your reader’s attention.

**One morning a young mother had her seven-month-old son in his stroller under the peach tree near their family swimming pool. She walked to her kitchen to get a knife so she could peel a peach for him. Ten seconds later, she found him face down with the stroller at the bottom of the pool. She immediately pulled him out and administered artificial respiration to him.** If she had been gone any longer, he might have become one of the statistics that plague our country every year when many children die needlessly in water-related accidents. These child drownings could, however, be greatly reduced if parents never left their children unattended around water, if pools were properly fenced, and if other safety devices were installed in or by the pool.

1. **A Quotation**. A quotation from someone connected with your topic, from an article you’re writing about, or from an expert on your subject can be a good way of opening your introduction. You might look up a famous quotation on your subject in a book such as *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*. Use these sparingly.

**“The mind is its own place, and itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.”** This thought by John Milton was recorded over three hundred years ago, but it is still timely today. He seems to be saying that people are the ones to control their lives. They can be miserable when things are going well, just as they can be happy when things are going wrong. With this thought in mind, individuals can control their attitude about life by facing issues, looking at the bright side, and reducing stress.

1. **A Striking Statement or Fact**. A fact can be used as a striking lead-in to an essay. Once you have captured the attention of your reader through a strategy like a striking or interesting fact, he or she will tend to keep reading.

**In the desert regions of Arizona, solar homes date back to the pre-Colombian Indians. These people carefully designed their homes in the recesses of south-facing cliffs to receive the warmth of the winter sun. In the summer, shade was provided by the overhanging cliffs.** Today, as then, the desert-region solar home must be carefully designed to use the sun efficiently in the orientation, the exterior, and the interior.