

WRITING AN INTRODUCTION

Upon successful completion of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Use six different approaches to write an introduction (to a provided thesis). With every approach, you should:
 - introduce the subject
 - present the thesis
 - outline your plan of development

As you write, your supporting arguments for an assignment can totally change or start to support a slightly different thesis statement than the one you started with. Consequently, sometimes you may find it beneficial to write your introduction *after* you have written the rest of your paper. This is especially true if you are not 100 percent certain about what you want to express in your paper.

Introductions may be easier to compose initially if you know exactly what you want to express before you start writing. Whether you write your introduction first or last, however, a good introduction always has four characteristics. This lesson addresses all of them.

PART 1: A GOOD INTRODUCTION AROUSES READERS' INTEREST.

While the introduction may sometimes be written last, it should not be treated as less important. Just as you want readers to *stay* interested as they read the body of your paper, you want them to *become* interested when they read your introduction. You can arouse readers' interest in a number of ways. Below are different introductions that might be used in an essay containing the following thesis statement: *Housing development rules that prohibit the display of campaign signs are bad for America.*

Notice that all of the methods explain, directly or indirectly, the reason that the essay is relevant. Perhaps the essay addresses a topic that has been in the news recently. Or maybe it points out how the issue is one that affects most or all people. Good introductions always “sell” the reader on why he or she should spend time reading the text that follows. The approach you choose will depend on your intended audience.

Approach #1: Use a brief anecdote.

Housing Associations' Prohibitive Rules Bad for Country

by Joe American

In July the *Hometown Daily* featured a story about Hometown resident Suzie Patriot, who was ordered by Summer Meadow Housing Development to remove a campaign sign from her garden. The display of campaign signs apparently violates

development regulations, and Patriot was told she would be fined if she did not comply with the rule. As a devoted supporter of the candidate running against Ms. Patriot's choice in the race, I am sure that I would disagree with her about many things. However, I believe she has every right to display her sign, and I would be happy to join forces with her to fight this injustice.

Housing development rules that prohibit the display of campaign signs are bad for America. All people, regardless of their voter preferences or political affiliation—and regardless of whether they rent or own—should be allowed to display campaign signs on their lawns and in their windows. Regulations that prohibit campaign signs discourage expression of good citizenship, foster our country's unhealthy obsession with political correctness, and, quite frankly, threaten democracy.

Approach #2: Oppose an argument that has already been developed.

Housing Associations' Prohibitive Rules Bad for Country

by Joe American

Friday's edition of the *Hometown Daily* contained a letter in which Hometown resident Larry Ruleshappy expressed his support of a recent governing decision by Summer Meadow Housing Development. In June the Summer Meadow governing board voted to prohibit residents from displaying campaign signs in their yards and windows. Ruleshappy believes that the prohibition of campaign signs is actually good for the country. With all due respect to Mr. Ruleshappy and his right to his opinion, I strongly disagree with his argument. **Housing development rules that prohibit the display of campaign signs are, in fact, bad for America.** All people, regardless of their voter preferences or political affiliation—and regardless of whether they rent or own—should be allowed to display campaign signs on their lawns and in their windows. Regulations that prohibit campaign signs discourage expression of good citizenship, foster our country's unhealthy obsession with political correctness, and, quite frankly, threaten democracy.

*Approach #3: Ask a series of questions.***Housing Associations' Prohibitive Rules Bad for Country**

by Joe American

Are you tired of dealing with meaningless rules in every area of your life? Are you tired of people infringing on your rights as an American citizen? Are you tired of political correctness and how it is affecting our country and our democracy?

Well, *you* might be tired of these things, but governing boards of housing associations across the country apparently aren't. Prohibiting the display of campaign signs has become a common practice in many of our nation's neighborhoods and communities. A woman in nearby Summer Meadow Housing Development was recently ordered to remove a campaign sign from her yard, and the American Civil Liberties Union litigates sign-related cases often in election years. **Common or not, however, housing development rules that prohibit the display of campaign signs are bad for America.** All people, regardless of their voter preferences or political affiliation—and regardless of whether they rent or own—should be allowed to display campaign signs on their lawns and in their windows. Regulations that prohibit campaign signs discourage expression of good citizenship, foster our country's unhealthy obsession with political correctness, and, quite frankly, threaten democracy.

*Approach #4: Use a catchy quotation.***Housing Associations' Prohibitive Rules Bad for Country**

by Joe American

"I might as well live in a prison. I'd have more freedom."

These are the words of Suzie Patriot, the Hometown resident who was recently ordered by Summer Meadow Housing Development to remove a campaign sign from her garden. The display of campaign signs apparently violates development regulations, and Patriot was told she would be fined if she did not comply with the rule. As a devoted supporter of the candidate running against Ms. Patriot's choice in

race, I'm sure that I would disagree with her about many things. However, I believe she has every right to display her sign, and I would be happy to join forces with her to fight this injustice.

All people, regardless of their voter preferences or political affiliation—and regardless of whether they rent or own—should be allowed to display campaign signs on their lawns and in their windows. **Housing development rules that prohibit the display of campaign signs are bad for America.** Such regulations discourage expression of good citizenship, foster our country's unhealthy obsession with political correctness, and, quite frankly, threaten democracy.

Approach #5: Refute a common belief or assumption.

Housing Associations' Prohibitive Rules Bad for Country

by Joe American

Some people, especially those from large cities, believe that housing associations are a representation of America's greatness. For people who have spent most of their lives in crowded apartments in metropolitan areas, living in a housing development can seem like the realization of the American dream. After all, housing developments allow people to own a little land and benefit from the close geographical proximity of big-city shopping without having to live in a downtown area. They also afford people the security of having neighbors who are close while enjoying the privacy of not having them *too* close.

People often fail to understand, however, that the governance of housing developments can be far from American. One particular issue that speaks to housing developments' un-American governance has to do with the display of campaign signs during election seasons. Rules that prohibit residents from displaying campaign signs are becoming more and more common in housing developments, but being common does not make them right. **In fact, housing development regulations that prohibit the display of campaign signs are bad for America.** Such regulations discourage

expression of good citizenship, foster our country's unhealthy obsession with political correctness, and, quite frankly, threaten democracy.

Approach #6: Use a catchy fact or statistic.

Housing Associations' Prohibitive Rules Bad for Country

by Joe American

During the last election season, attorneys in America defended approximately 250,000 citizens who had been ordered by housing associations to remove campaign signs from their lawns. Assuming that at least that many citizens did not take their issues to court, a minimum of 500,000 Americans found their First Amendment rights to political expression being challenged. That's one-fourth the population of Kansas!

Regardless of the various reasons that housing authorities cite in defense of their positions on the issue, housing development rules that prohibit the display of campaign signs are bad for America. All people, regardless of their voter preferences or political affiliation—and regardless of whether they rent or own—should be allowed to display campaign signs on their lawns and in their windows. Regulations that prohibit campaign signs discourage expression of good citizenship, foster our country's unhealthy obsession with political correctness, and, quite frankly, threaten democracy.

PART 2: A GOOD INTRODUCTION INTRODUCES THE SUBJECT.

In all of the example approaches from Part 1 above, readers are introduced to the main subject of the essay within the first 1–3 paragraphs. Some approaches necessitate the *direct* introduction of the subject a little later than others. However, *all* of the example introductions tell readers what the essay is about.

PART 3: A GOOD INTRODUCTION CONTAINS A THESIS STATEMENT.

All of the example approaches from Part 1 also contain a thesis statement. In the case of Joe American's essay, the thesis is that *housing development rules that prohibit the display of campaign signs are bad for America*. Again, the approach will dictate how soon the thesis is stated, but it should always be a clear part of the introduction.

PART 4: A GOOD INTRODUCTION OUTLINES THE WRITER'S PLAN OF ARGUMENTATIVE DEVELOPMENT.

As you read the different approaches in Part 1, you probably noticed that the following sentence was in all of the examples:

Regulations that prohibit campaign signs discourage expression of good citizenship, foster our country's unhealthy obsession with political correctness, and, quite frankly, threaten democracy.

You may have wondered why this sentence was important enough to be included in every example. The reason is that it outlines the writer's plan of argumentative development. In other words, in addition to stating his thesis, the writer uses this sentence to tell the reader what arguments he will use to support the thesis. Stating your plan of development in your introduction helps readers anticipate as they read. When they get to your supporting arguments, they are better able to tell when you move from one to the next if you have outlined your plan of development in the introduction. A plan of development can also help arouse readers' interest, as your arguments might be different than arguments they have read before. In addition, stating your plan of development can help *you* stay focused as you write.

EXERCISE 1

Given the italicized thesis statement below, write an introduction using each approach identified in Part 1 of this lesson. For your convenience, the approaches are restated below the thesis statement. In each introduction you must 1) introduce the subject, 2) present the thesis statement, and 3) outline your plan of development. (In order to outline your plan of development, you will need to think of two to four arguments to support the thesis statement.) Work with your tutor if you wish.

The Sterling College cafeteria is the best place in town to eat.

Approach #1: Use a brief anecdote.

Approach #2: Oppose an argument that has already been developed.

Approach #3: Ask a series of questions.

Approach #4: Use a catchy quotation.

Approach #5: Refute a common belief or assumption.

Approach #6: Use a catchy fact or statistic.

(You can make these things up as you go.)