



## GETTING OVER INTRODUCTION BLOCK

by the student editors of ***TACKLING YOUR FIRST COLLEGE PAPER***  
a *Students Helping Students™* book

We've all been there—sitting in front of a computer screen, the clock counting down precious minutes, and the cursor blinking impatiently at the top of a blank page. Beginning to write your paper can be tough, kind of like starting to run after standing still for a while—it's much harder to get going than to keep going.

To get passed the empty screen, try writing your introduction twice. The first time, just try to get something down on paper. Don't worry about how it sounds or if it works as the perfect introduction to your paper. It probably doesn't. After you finish your paper, go back and rewrite your introduction. You'll find that it's much easier to handle because your entire paper is laid out in your mind.

A good introduction catches the reader's interest, clearly states the paper's thesis, and briefly suggests what arguments and analyses you'll use to support your main claim. Although it doesn't have to be, your thesis is usually stated in the last sentence of your introduction. Most students prefer to put it last and use it as a launching pad for the rest of the paper.

The introduction is one of the most creative parts of your paper, and there is no formula for writing a good one. Try to be original, but don't be too gimmicky. Don't start with a fictional narrative unless you're really comfortable writing fiction. Begin with a quote if you want, but make sure that it's relevant to your topic and is there for a purpose.

Many of us learned the "funnel" model for the introduction in high school: It starts with a broad claim and moves to a clear and specific thesis statement. There's some validity to this idea. Especially on the first draft of your paper, it can help to start with some general ideas about your topic and move to the focus of your paper—your thesis.

Some students take the idea of a funnel way too seriously. We've heard a few professors joke about the "primordial ooze" introduction in first-year papers: "Since he emerged from the primordial ooze, man has always wondered about (insert topic here)..." This kind of introduction doesn't get you very far. Whatever general statements you write at the beginning of your introduction, make sure that they're related to your topic and that you use them to set up your thesis.