INTRODUCTIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND THESIS STATEMENTS
In academic essays, introductions and conclusions are the first and last impression of your paper – much like in real life, you should always leave a good first and last impression to make your paper stand out!

**HINT:** Write your intro + conclusion last! It is often easier and faster to introduce/conclude a topic you just spent a lot of time on!
THE 3 PARTS OF AN INTRODUCTION
So what should an engaging and effective introduction do?

1. Get the reader interested and engaged in the general topic ("hook")

2. Go from "general" to "more specific" (narrow down your topic so that you can introduce a thesis statement without too much of an abrupt jump between hook and the specifics of your paper)

3. Give your thesis statement (what your paper will explain or argue and the main points)
Celebrating the revolution, French citizens sent King Louie XVI to the guillotine. Every Halloween day in ancient Rome, criminals were executed in the city square. In the 1880s, in an effort to prevent crime in the US, hundreds of bank robbers, horse thieves, and murderers were hanged in front of the public. However, in the last half of the 20th century, the death penalty has faced increasing opposition. Many people, especially members of churches, are against capital punishment, and most advanced countries have eliminated the death penalty. While it is true that the death penalty has some negative points, it is still a powerful and useful tool. Therefore, our society should keep the death penalty to deter crime, to give fairness to victims and their families, and to punish inhumane criminals.
HOOK: Celebrating the revolution, French citizens sent King Louie XVI to the guillotine. Every Halloween day in ancient Rome, criminals were executed in the city square. In the 1880s, in an effort to prevent crime in the US, hundreds of bank robbers, horse thieves, and murderers were hanged in front of the public. NARROW: However, in the last half of the 20th century, the death penalty has faced increasing opposition. Many people, especially members of churches, are against capital punishment, and most advanced countries have eliminated the death penalty. While it is true that the death penalty has some negative points, it is still a powerful and useful tool. THESIS: Therefore, our society should keep the death penalty to deter crime, to give fairness to victims and their families, and to punish inhumane criminals.
The “hook” is the first part of your introduction – it should engage the reader, and not (yet) argue or explain anything related to your writing assignment!

Be interesting, moving, or informative!
Use these 5 techniques to engage the reader:

1. Use a quotation or surprising fact
   For example, in a paper about the death penalty:
   → *Every year, 189 prisoners in the US are executed for violent crimes...*
   → *US Senator Russ Feingold once exclaimed, “...”*

2. Ask a question or describe a problem, dilemma, or controversy associated with your paper
   For example, in a paper about assisted suicide:
   → *What would you do if you were diagnosed with a terminal illness?*
3. Tell an anecdote or reason for your interest in the topic
For example, in a paper about pet adoption:

→ *Last Christmas, my family adopted an old but loveable dog from the animal shelter.*

4. Define a word that is central to your topic
For example, in a paper on genetically modified food:

→ *The term “genetically modified” means...*

5. Make a historical comparison or contrast
For example, in a paper on prison rates among minorities:

→ *Since the 1970s, the rate of African-Americans in prison has more than doubled.*
What is wrong with this introduction? How could you fix it? Also, which of the 5 introduction techniques was used here?

One Christmas, my father bought a new set of lights for the Christmas tree. He bought them very late, on the 23rd of December, so we did not decorate our tree until the 24th of December. However, we all became very sad when we found out that the lights were defective and would not light up. Our family had no time to buy more lights, and as a result we had a Christmas tree without lights that year. Consumer protection laws are necessary to ensure that buyers have confidence in the goods they purchase, to enforce retail standards, and to provide greater product safety.
Right – the thesis statement is too abrupt! Make a smooth transition from “hook” to thesis statement:

One Christmas, my father bought a new set of lights for the Christmas tree. He bought them very late, on the 23rd of December, so we did not decorate our tree until the 24th of December. However, we all became very sad when we found out that the lights were defective, and would not light up. There was no time to buy more lights, and we had a Christmas tree without lights that year. Like the majority of consumers in the US, my family had placed a blind trust in the products available for purchase in stores, but this trust is often misguided. A lack of legal protection laws allows for low-quality products to be sold by US retailers, and this has a number of other negative effects on the American economy. Thus, consumer protection laws are necessary to ensure that buyers can have confidence in the goods they purchase, to enforce more consistent retail standards, and to facilitate greater product safety.
A thesis statement is in many ways the most important sentence (or two) that you will write in any paper. It is like a blueprint or foundation to your essay – it helps you (and the reader!) stay focused:

- gives the main idea of the entire essay
- suggests the topic for each body paragraph (for short or 5-paragraph essays)
- commonly has three parts (for 5-paragraph essays) that are parallel in structure
- avoids 1st person expressions like “I’m going to talk about…”
- the supporting points should be logically connected to your thesis or argument

Example: To become a more inviting campus, Gainesville State College should expand its cafeteria, offer student housing, and offer childcare.
Given the thesis statement below, how many paragraphs do you expect in the body of the essay? What will the writer talk about first, second, and last?

Thus, consumer protection laws are necessary ¹to ensure that buyers can have confidence in the goods they purchase, ²to enforce more consistent retail standards, and ³to facilitate greater product safety.

**HINT:** Don’t include your evidence, quotes, or arguments in the thesis statement – wait and do this in the body of the essay!

**HINT:** When writing your essay, repeatedly go back to your thesis statement to make sure you are staying focused. The supporting points in your thesis statement must be reflected in the essay’s body paragraphs!

**HINT:** For 5-paragraph essays: One supporting point in thesis statement = one paragraph in body essay (only a general rule!)
Let’s practice! Choose the thesis statements that you think are the most effective for the topic *Should marijuana be legal in the United States?*

1. **The use of marijuana should be legal for a number of specific and compelling reasons.**

2. **As the Center for Disease Control has shown in its 2003 Drug Abuse Report, marijuana should not be legal because of its relationship to lung cancer rates in the US; 13% of lung cancer cases can be tied to marijuana consumption (54).**

3. **Marijuana should not be legal because it is too dangerous.**

4. **Using marijuana should be against the law because it damages the brain, causes memory loss, and leads to birth defects.**

5. **In this essay, I will explain the negative impact marijuana has on health and cognition.**
Conclusions are in many ways similar to introductions: they do not present new relevant information. Instead, they guide the reader away from the essay. Conclusions have two components:

1. A final analysis or interpretation of the paper. Either restate your thesis or sum up the general meaning of your overall argument, explanation, or description.

2. An ending comment, such as an interesting idea or your personal interpretation of the entire paper.
Use these 4 techniques to write an effective final comment:

1. **Echo or continue what you did in the intro’s “hook”:**
   Did you tell a personal anecdote? Finish the story or suggest solutions! Did you use a statistic? Use the essay’s arguments to re-interpret the numbers in a new way!

2. **Use a quotation**
   If you opened your paper with a quote, you can finish it with one as well!

3. **Make a suggestion or prediction**
   In a paper discussing reasons for domestic violence, you could offer a few suggestions for overcoming the causes.
On your handout, read the example introduction and conclusion for an essay about globalization. Do the following:

1.) find the hook and the transition to the thesis statement
2.) underline the thesis statement
3.) find the supporting points that are restated in the conclusion
4.) underline the ending comment

What do we do when we have a problem? Leave it alone? Or try to solve it? Most people say that globalization creates more and more problems, such as increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. However, this difference...
Thank you for attending, and make sure to stop by the Writing Center (Acad. IV, room 2103) if you need help with your writing!