

Writing Wrench

The First Sentence, Types of
Introductions, and Flow and Rhythm

Four Opening Sentences

A series of religious wars, collectively known as the Crusades, took place from 1095 to 1291 CE.

Having slain countless foes, lionhearted knights stood in crimson glory.

The Crusades, lasting between 1095 and 1291, were caused primarily by people who desired political and economic gain.

In 1095, Pope Urban II promoted a holy war to repel Islamic influence in Jerusalem and the greater Byzantine Empire.

The First Paragraph

- (1) Attention-grabbing sentence (“The Hook”)
- (2) Set up necessary context
- (3) Introduce and define core terms
- (4) Premise/thesis/argument/claim
 - Narrow, concise, causal and/or contrasting
 - Tells us “So what?” and explains “Why?”
- (5) Structure (if it isn’t already part of your thesis)
 - Signposting what you’ll analyze in the body paragraphs

Two Types of Introductions

Type One – A Creative [Relevant] Narrative

Tends to be more challenging to write

Tends to be riskier

But if you do it well, the reward is priceless

Having slain countless foes, lionhearted knights stood in crimson glory. Their armor shined, bearing the scarlet cross to illustrate God's love. Yet, amid all that battlefield red echoed a haunting tale of gore, death, and evil. Medieval Crusaders may have....

Two Types of Introductions

Type Two – A Historical/Idea-Based Narrative

Tends to be easier to write

Historical context is a more direct path to the thesis

Idea-based narrative is less direct

In 1095, Pope Urban II promoted a holy war to repel Islamic influence in Jerusalem and the greater Byzantine Empire.

Scholars often define “conflict” as the absence of peace, yet peace and conflict can both exist in war.

Two Last Thoughts

Introductions must have proper “pace” and “flow” and “rhythm” to the thesis.

Bad: One-to-three sentence general statement

Good: More-than-three-sentence general statement

Think of an introduction like an airplane take off:

1. Taxi to the runway
2. Advance the throttle
3. Pull the yoke back
4. Lift off

Two Last Thoughts

General statements must *relate* to the thesis.

Although the Pope attributed the Crusades to God's will, his plan to drive the Muslims out of Jerusalem only satisfied the Western Church's political ambition: he sought to improve Europeans' economic conditions, open new trade, and control the Holy Land to expand Christian influence in the Middle East.

If you begin with your thesis with some a contrast (as seen here in the dependent clause), the reader will assume you've developed commentary earlier on in the paragraph (the general statement) about the pope attributing the Crusades to God's will. But since that's not the argument, you move away from the dependent clause's idea and more in the direction of the independent clause.