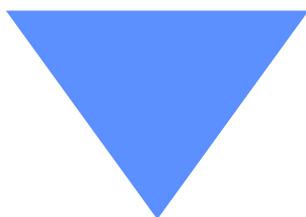




THE PURPOSE OF AN INTRODUCTION

An introduction sets the context of your assignment. It should capture the reader's attention and define the topic, giving background information and suggesting problems or issues that may arise within the research area. Most importantly, it should make your argument and structure clear to the reader.

As such, a good introduction begins broadly before narrowing the scope to your specific response to the question. It should include:



- An initial sentence which indicates the general topic
- Background information to the topic
- The significance of the topic (why is it important?)
- Definitions of key terms (when necessary)
- A thesis statement which states your argument and structure
- The key points that will support your argument

This is a general guide and, depending on the length and complexity of your writing, you may need to make small changes. Importantly, remember that an introduction is a map that will guide the reader through your essay. Usually, an introduction should be around 10% of the total length of your assignment.



TIP: try writing your introduction **last**. One of the reasons many students struggle with introductions is they are unsure what to include. You have to know the ending before you can begin: what is your conclusion and how will you demonstrate it? When editing, return to your thesis statement and ensure it represents what the essay goes on to do.

THESIS STATEMENTS

A thesis statement is one or two sentences that expresses the main idea of your writing. A good thesis statement tells your reader your position and how you will structure it.

ARGUMENTATIVE THESIS STATEMENTS

In essays, most thesis statements are **argumentative**. This means they **state the claim** the essay makes about the issue and **outline the premises** that will support it. In doing so, they provide the structure of the essay. For example:



The death penalty should not be restored in Australia due to the discriminatory nature of capital punishment, the fallibility of proving guilt in criminal cases and the violation of the most fundamental human right, the right to life.

[SEE THE GUIDE ON WRITING AN ARGUMENT](#)

NON-ARGUMENTATIVE THESIS STATEMENTS

In other kinds of writing, the thesis statement may be **expository** rather than argumentative. Expository writing provides a critical explanation or discussion of a topic. Therefore, an expository thesis statement should outline the main focus for discussion in your assignment. For example:

This essay will discuss the history of cattle use and consumption in China, from traditional farming methods through to small-scale farms and modern-day production and examine the socio-ecological issues tied with the modern beef industry.



TIPS FOR WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

Think of your thesis statement as a direct answer to a question. If you have been assigned a question, rephrase it as a statement that includes your specific answer. If you haven't been given a question, try to turn your instructions into a question first. For example:

For education to be equitable, Australia should embrace a model of single-sex schooling. Discuss this statement in the light of renewed debate concerning separate schooling for boys and girls.

Rephrasing this as a question:

In the light of renewed debate concerning separate schooling for boys and girls, should Australia embrace a model of single-sex schooling for education to be equitable?

Then you can rephrase it with your specific answer:

Australia should not embrace a model of single-sex schooling because overly deterministic differentiations between 'boys' and 'girls' are problematic on the basis they overlook the socio-historical, rather than biological, foundations of educational inequality.

LANGUAGE: GETTING THE RIGHT BALANCE

When constructing your thesis statement, you should be **clear** and **confident** about your position on the topic. Your aim is to convince your reader of your position by providing sufficient justification. However, it is important not to **overstate** your argument by using generalisations or sweeping statements such as 'all university students use too many commas in their writing.' How can this possibly be proven?



Qualifiers are words and phrases that can limit your meaning and avoid overstating. These include:

may, many, could, most, frequently, commonly, probably, few, a minority, numerous, unlikely, seldom

It is important to strike a balance between overstating and over-qualifying. Too many qualifiers can make you sound unsure of yourself and your writing too informal.

EXAMPLE INTRODUCTION

Question: For education to be equitable, Australia should embrace a model of single-sex schooling. Discuss this statement in the light of renewed debate concerning separate schooling for boys and girls.

Introduction to the topic and background of the issue.

The significance of the

Thesis statement

Outline of the essay

Concern for gender equity in schools has been a key issue in Australia for at least 40 years. Some prominent theorists, such as Sax (2005), argue that innate sex differences, among other key factors, tend to make learning in schools much more difficult for boys. From this perspective, it would make sense to separate boys from girls and teach each group differently; however, doing so would also privilege an essentialist standpoint that obscures important social and cultural elements of the debate. This essay argues that Australia should not embrace a model of single-sex schooling because overly deterministic differentiations between 'boys' and 'girls' are problematic on the basis they overlook the socio-historical, rather than biological, foundations of educational inequality. It will explore this issue in relation to essentialist, sex role theory, queer theory, and social constructionist perspectives on same sex education.