Writing Handout 15 - Introductory Paragraphs

Question: What are the main functions of an introductory paragraph?

The main functions are (1) to get the reader's attention and (2) encourage him or her to read more. The introduction can also interpret the title, establish the importance of the topic, identify issue(s), clarify problematic terms, or indicate the structure of the rest of the essay.

Question: How can you get readers interested and encourage them to keep reading?

The easiest way is to make sure that the information is new and interesting to your audience.

Question: How does the introduction outline the main argument?

This is the job of the main idea sentence or thesis statement, which states the main idea of the essay and hints at what the rest of the essay will discuss.

Question: How does the introduction summarize the essay?

The introduction allows readers to get an idea of what the essay is about and understand what the writer's position will be. This also allows readers to decide if it is worth their time to read more.

Think of the introductory paragraph as an _upside down triangle_. Start with a very general sentence. Each sentence after will get closer and closer (more and more specific) to your Main Idea Sentence, which is the last sentence of the paragraph.

Introduction Checklist:

✓ Does the introduction make the structure of the essay clear?

✓ How have you made your essay interesting, eye-catching, or appealing?

✓ Does the reader have a clear idea of your attitude or position?

✓ Have you gone into too much detail in the introduction? A long introduction may confuse the reader into believing he has already reached the body of the text, or it may create a feeling of impatience.

✓ Have you gone back and checked your introduction after you have finished writing the rest of the essay? This is a good idea because the introduction and conclusion are often complementary. The conclusion, for instance, may return to the points raised in the introduction to answer the issues outlined there.