Introductory Paragraphs

GENERAL FORMAT FOR SINGLE-PARAGRAPH INTRODUCTIONS

If you are unsure of how to organize your introductory paragraph, this is a good format to follow:

1. Hook (be creative in capturing your audience's attention)
2. Background Information (or statements that connect the hook to the thesis)
3. Thesis

EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT HOOKS

Personal Anecdote/Story:

Starting a paper with an interesting story (whether it is your own or someone else's that you researched) can be a fun and creative way to start a paper, as well as effective in getting your audience to care about your topic.

Topic: Argue for universal healthcare

Hook: Begin with a true story about someone who finds out they have cancer but cannot afford healthcare or the costs of treatment.

Ask Question(s):

If you use this method, make sure you either ask questions to get the audience to think about a specific topic, or ask questions that you later answer.

Topic: Effects of current economy on family-owned businesses

Hook: *Is it true that bigger is always better? Could it be that society's insatiable desire for more is, in many ways, giving people less? Once society has accepted the premise that more choice is better, is it possible to reverse that trend? For small, local, family-owned businesses, more and bigger has been anything but better.*

("Romeo and Juliet Hook Strategies." Windsor High School. Web.http://www .windsorhs.com).

Quotation, Song Lyric, or Poem:

If you are going to begin with a quotation of some sort, make sure it strongly relates to your argument and is very interesting. Don't use a quotation if you could say the same thing with fewer words or in a more interesting way by summarizing.

A recent article in Time magazine states that the viewing of extremely violent television shows is the number one cause of violence in our inner cities.

Unusual Fact or Statement:

Avoid very broad or bland statements. Instead, it can be very effective to begin with an unusual fact to get the audience to think about something in a different way.

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, could spend one million dollars per day, every day, seven days a week and would not run out of money until he was 311 years old!

("Romeo and Juliet Hook Strategies." Windsor High School. Web.<http://www.windsorhs.com>)

WHAT TO AVOID
- Very general, broad, or vague statements. It is okay to be specific and direct in the introduction; it actually makes your paper more interesting. Make sure your introduction doesn't just loosely relate to your topic, but strongly relates to and introduces your thesis.
- Overused statements: "In today's society..." "Since the beginning of time ..."
- First-person statements: "In this paper I will..." "My paper will address..."

ORGANIZING THE WHOLE PARAGRAPH
It can help to think of an introduction as a funnel, or the top of an hourglass:

The hook grabs the reader's attention (see examples)

Background information provides context.

Introduce your **specific topic**

State your **thesis.**
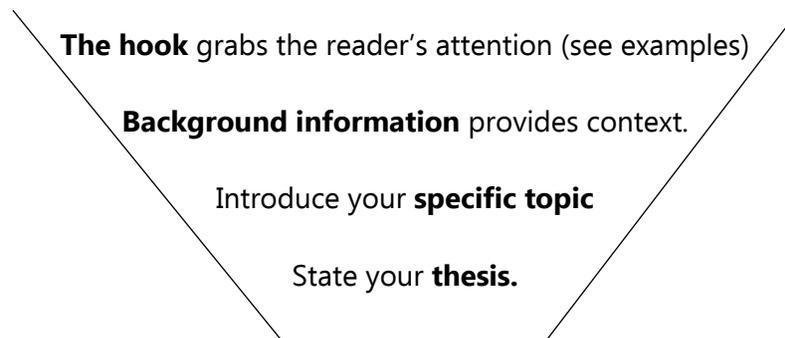
Structuring your introduction this way, you might come up with something like this:

Hook: *Is it true that bigger is always better? Could it be that society's insatiable desire for more is, in many ways, giving people less? Once society has accepted the premise that more choice is better, is it possible to reverse that trend? For small, local, family-owned businesses, more and bigger has been anything but better.*

Background: *While economic policies are often revised with big businesses in mind, smaller companies have difficulty making their voices heard. But these small businesses do have a large impact on their local economies.*

Specific topic: *When big chain stores like Walmart come into communities like Green Hill, Oregon, they force out local family owned businesses such as the Verner Brothers' Grocery.*

Thesis: *The case study of Verner Brothers' Grocery and its struggle to avoid bankruptcy after trying to keep up with the bigger chain stores demonstrates the extent to which the "bigger is better" mindset can upset local economies.*