

## Hooks, Introductions, and Conclusions in Expository Writing: Persuasive Papers and Speeches

### **The Hook**

Writers use a "hook" to capture the their audience's attention and introduce their thesis. There are a number of ways of doing this; seven standard methods are described below. You are not required to use one of these styles; these are just ideas to move you beyond your writer's block. There is no single best way to begin a persuasive essay. You will need to figure out what works for you and your topic.

1. **Question:** You might choose to open your essay with a question for the reader. Usually, you also answer your question in your hook paragraph.
2. **Quote:** Another standard opening involves using a quotation from one of your resources or a simply a quote that you are able to connect well to your topic.
3. **Anecdote:** You might try beginning your paper with a small story that relates to your topic. This can be amusing, surprising, shocking, and/or entertaining – provided you keep it short and to the point.
4. **Unusual Detail or Startling Fact.** Shock or surprise your reader with a startling detail or interesting fact about your topic.
5. **Exaggeration or Outrageous Statement.** For example, you could begin with: "The whole nation watched as..." or "Criminals across American rejoiced upon hearing the outcome of..."
6. **Strong Statement.** For example, "If you value freedom of speech, you will be sorely disappointed by the outcome of \_\_\_\_\_."
7. **Statistic or Fact.** Give your reader a number facts to add emphasis and get your reader interested in the topic. For example, "Americans and Europeans spend \$17 billion on pet food, \$4 billion more than the estimated amount needed to provide basic health and nutrition for everyone in the world."
8. **Blunt Beginning.** Sometimes it works best to be direct and state your opinion in a few words as your hook. For example, "All guns should be outlawed in America."

### **How to Put Together Your Introduction Paragraph**

Typically, the *thesis statement* is worked in after your "hook" in your introductory paragraph. It usually takes a "*bridge*" sentence to connect the hook to the thesis to complete this all-important first paragraph. The flow is: 1) Hook; 2) Bridge or Connecting Sentence; and 3) Thesis.

## Conclusions

A piece of persuasive writing usually ends by summarizing the most important details of the argument, but not in a boring or repetitive way. You might restate your thesis in a fresh, new way, or mention your most important argument(s), also using new words. In addition to the summary, the conclusion should clearly state what the reader is supposed to believe or do. In other words, your conclusion should feature a "call to action" and/or a strong personal statement about the topic. You can do this with a:

1. **Prediction:** The conclusion may suggest or predict what will happen if people take action on your issue, or if they don't (whichever is more powerful).
2. **Question:** Closing with a question lets your readers make their own predictions and draw their own conclusions.
3. **Recommendation:** When you close with a recommendation, you ask readers directly to do or believe something.
4. **Quotation:** Since a quotation may summarize, predict, question, or call for action, you may use a quotation within a conclusion for nearly any kind of paper.
5. **Image.** An argument can be turned into an image by imagining and describing a picture to prove your point of view. You might start this type of conclusion with the word, "Imagine...". Or, any **synonym** for the word imagine.
6. **Scene.** The writing of a dramatic scene can be an unconventional way to end a persuasive essay. If you effectively dramatize your point, the reader will be drawn into your opinion before he or she can reject it.

**And why is this guidance for conclusions included in a handout on hooks?** This is because writers often return to the idea introduced in the "hook" when they write their conclusion to give their essay a sense of "coming full circle." This often works to achieve a satisfying rhythm of closure.

### How to Put Together Your Conclusion Paragraph

The flow of the conclusion is typically: 1) Summarize argument (but do not bore your reader!); 2) Make a "call to action" or personal statement.

And try to connect the end of your paper to the hook in your introduction if you can.