

## WHAT NOT TO DO: INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Sure, looking at what to do is helpful, but sometimes looking at what not to do can be of even greater help. So, what shouldn't you do in introductions and conclusions?

### Introductions

- Don't be insecure about your argument. Phrases such as "like," "may," and "in my opinion" communicate a lack of confidence.
- Don't waste time getting to the point; just get there. Below, the pointless part of the introduction has been italicized.
  - Pointless: "*Throughout the history of the world, there have been many different civilizations. Each civilization has their own folklore, with different gods and goddesses. One of these civilizations is found in the Ancient Near East. In Ancient West Semitic folklore, Yahweh sometimes has a female goddess escort, Asherah. Asherah plays a prominent role in many ancient pantheons.*"
  - Instead, use this: "While there were many gods and goddesses in the Ancient Near East, a selective few played prominent roles in the ancient pantheons; Asherah is one of these goddesses." And then, move on to your thesis about Asherah's role.
- Don't forget the thesis if you need one.
- Don't start with the thesis; get there. Normally, the thesis is the last sentence in the introduction.
- Beginning an essay with a quote is cliché. Use quotes wisely, though rarely.
- Don't start with a dictionary definition. It's dry and cliché.
- Don't state the objective of the paper or refer to the paper as a paper. In other words, don't say "in this paper..."

### Conclusions

- Don't simply copy the introduction. They have different purposes.
- Don't simply summarize. Ask yourself, "what now?"
- Don't copy and paste the thesis from the introduction. Reword it and re-explore it. Only state it again if it serves a different purpose or if the paper is so long the reader might need to be reminded.
- Never introduce an idea that argues your thesis. If you want to add these points, add them prior to the conclusion. You can always add body paragraphs.
- Avoid bringing up minor points.
- Ending with quotes is cheesy and unnecessary. Your audience has read this far because they care about what you have to say, not JFK. But if you use a quote in the introduction, you can sometimes create a connection to it in the conclusion.
- Avoid the phrases "In summary" or "In conclusion." For each assignment, your professor reads about 30 other papers that use this formula; be creative and change things up for them.

Resources used: "Common Mistakes in Introductions" by Case Western Reserve University.

"Things NOT to do in an introductory paragraph" by The Guide to Grammar and Writing, Capital Community College Foundation.

"What Not to Do in a Conclusion by Shmoop," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tR4uxPfg21A>.

"SIX THINGS TO AVOID IN YOUR CONCLUSION" by Hope College, David J. Klooster Center for Excellence in Writing.