• To show similarity - also, likewise, in the same way, similarly, etc.
• To show an exception - but, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary, yet, etc.
• To show a sequence - first, second, third, next, then, etc.
• To emphasize - indeed, in fact, of course, etc.
• To show cause and effect - accordingly, consequently, therefore, thus, etc.
• To conclude or repeat - finally, in conclusion, on the whole, in the end, etc.

INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introductions and conclusions are among the most challenging of all paragraphs. Why? Because introductions and conclusions must do more than simply state a topic sentence and offer support. Introductions and conclusions must synthesize and provide context for your entire argument, and they must also make the proper impression on your reader.

Introductions

Your introduction is your chance to get your reader interested in your subject. Accordingly, the tone of the paragraph has to be just right. You want to inform, but not to the point of being dull; you want to intrigue, but not to the point of being vague; you want to take a strong stance, but not to the point of alienating your reader. Pay attention to the nuances of your tone. Seek out a second reader if you're not sure that you've managed to get the tone the way you want it.

Equally important to the tone of the introduction is that your introduction needs to "place" your argument into some larger context. Some strategies follow:

1. Announce your topic broadly, then declare your particular take. For example, if you are interested in talking about the narrator in Virginia Woolf's novels, you might 1) begin by saying that Woolf's narrator has posed a problem for many of her critics; 2) provide a quick definition of the problem, as others have defined it; and 3) declare your thesis (which states your own position on the matter).
2. **Provide any background material important to your argument.** If you are interested in exploring how turn of the century Viennese morality influenced the work of Sigmund Freud, you will in your introduction want to provide the reader, in broad strokes, a description of Vienna circa 1900. Don't include irrelevant details in your description; instead, emphasize those aspects of Viennese society (such as sexual mores) that might have most influenced Freud.

3. **Define key terms, as you intend to make use of them in your argument.** If, for example, you are writing a philosophy paper on the nature of reality, it is absolutely essential that you define the term for your reader. How do you understand the term "reality," in the context of this paper? Empirically? Rationally? Begin with a definition of terms, and from there work towards the declaration of your argument.

4. **Use an anecdote or quotation.** Sometimes you will find a terrific story or quotation that seems to reflect the main point of your paper. Don't be afraid to begin with it. Be sure, however, that you tie that story or quotation clearly and immediately to the main argument of your paper.

5. **Acknowledge your opponents.** When you are writing a paper about a matter that is controversial, you might wish to begin by summarizing the point of view of your adversaries. Then state your own position in opposition to theirs. In this way you place yourself clearly in the ongoing conversation. Be careful, though: you don't want to make too convincing a case for the other side.

Remember: your introduction is the first impression your argument will make on your reader. Take special care with your sentences so that they will be interesting. Also, take the time to consider who your readers are and what background they will bring with them to their reading. If your readers are very knowledgeable about the subject, you will not need to provide a lot of background information. If your readers are less knowledgeable, you will need to be more careful about defining your terms.

Finally, you might want to consider writing your introduction AFTER you've written the rest of your paper. Many writers find that they have a better grip on their subject once they've done their first draft. This "better grip" helps them to craft an introduction that is sure-footed, persuasive, interesting, and clear. (Note: Any changes that you make to an introduction and/or...
thesis statement will affect the paper that follows. Simply adding the new introductory paragraph will not produce a "completed" paper.)

**Conclusions**

Conclusions are also difficult to write. How do you manage to make the reader feel persuaded by what you’ve said? Even if the points of your paper are strong, the overall effect of your argument might fall to pieces if the paper as a whole is badly concluded.

Many students end their papers by simply summarizing what has come before. A summary of what the reader has just read is important to the conclusion - particularly if your argument has been complicated or has covered a lot of ground. But a good conclusion will do more. Just as the introduction sought to place the paper in the larger, ongoing conversation about the topic, so should the conclusion insist on returning the reader to that ongoing conversation, but with the feeling that they have learned something more. You don't want your reader to finish your paper and say, "So what?" Admittedly, writing a conclusion isn't easy to do.

Many of the strategies we've listed for improving your introductions can help you to improve your conclusions as well. In your conclusion you might:

1. Return to the **ongoing conversation**, emphasizing the importance of your own contribution to it.
2. Consider again the **background information** with which you began, and illustrate how your argument has shed new light on that information.
3. Return to the **key terms** and point out how your essay has added some new dimension to their meanings.
4. Use an **anecdote or quotation** that summarizes or reflects your main idea.
5. Acknowledge your **opponents** - if only to emphasize that you've beaten them.
6. Remember: **language** is especially important to a conclusion. Your goal in your final sentences is to leave your ideas resounding in your reader's mind. Give her something to think about. Make your language ring.