

Mastering the Essay

Lesson 3 – Introduction, Conclusion, and Transition Paragraphs

READINGS

- **"Arete & Achilles: Homer as the Foundation of Ancient Greek Education"**
- **Paragraphs** (UNC Chapel Hill)
- **Introductions** (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, College of Arts and Sciences, Writing Centre)
- **Conclusions** (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, College of Arts and Sciences, Writing Centre)
- **Transitions** (AIMS Community College Online Writing Lab)

INTRODUCTIONS

- The intro and conclusion are integral, important parts of the essay, not just extras. We would never consider the opening or closing scene of a story or movie unimportant or tacked on; we expect them to be unique, interesting, and satisfying. We need to work even harder to make intros and conclusions fulfill these criteria.
- A good intro **catches the reader's interest, serves as a roadmap to the work, contains the thesis within the last few sentences, and sets the tone for the piece.** "Catching the reader's interest" means showing the reader how your argument is important enough to merit spending the next ten or twenty minutes reading.
- An intro should gradually "zero in" on the thesis, giving the reader a reason to care about the thesis, usually by showing them something unexpected, controversial, relevant to modern life, or helpful/dangerous about its implications. Thus, you give the reader context for the thesis, narrowing in the whole way toward the thesis. Begin broad, end narrow. Just don't make it so broad that (a) you lose the reader's interest, (b) sound cliché, or (c) end up with opening sentences that could fit thousands of other theses.
- A good intro leaves the reader wanting to know more, but save actually explaining your arguments for the body of the essay.
- The intro is a great place to indicate to the reader the approach you'll be taking to the subject (arguing a position, comparing and contrasting two sides of the issue, telling a personal experience, etc.)

CONCLUSIONS

- The conclusion should consolidate what the reader has read, but go a step further; it should leave them on a note that will make your point stick in their minds. Common strategies include pointing out the implications your position could make for the future, or making a clever observation about the subject which the reader might not have understood when they first began reading the essay.
- Avoid the "summary-style conclusion" in which you merely summarize what you said in the paper. If you have not already convinced your reader, you definitely

are not going to do so in the conclusion. Instead, leave your reader with new thoughts and significances.

TRANSITION SENTENCES & PARAGRAPHS

- The purpose of any transition when writing is to show relationship: How do the ideas of one sentence or paragraph lead logically to the next? What is the relationship between one part and another?
- The AIMS College handout includes a list of transitional phrases to use when writing—note that each of these shows certain relationships, and you must use careful thinking to know which to use.
- The main parts of any body paragraph is the **sub-thesis, evidence, and explanation**, but body paragraphs also often need **transition sentences** at the beginning or, more often, at the end, to show how this step in the argument is related to the "steps" (paragraphs) around it.
- **Sections:** Sometimes when you are writing a long paper, you need an entire (usually quite short) paragraph to transition to a **section**. Sections are like "mini essays" within the larger essays. You could think of them like sub-headings in a chapter in a textbook. Use sections when the argument you want to make will take more than one paragraph. A good transition paragraph will show how the previous paragraph or paragraphs leads logically to this next set of paragraphs.

FINAL THOUGHTS & APPLICATION

- First and second person: Generally speaking, we reserve these voices for personal essays, which are less formal than academic works. Oftentimes, the temptation to use the first or second person can indicate that you as a writer are being lazy and making a personal appeal to draw in the reader rather than a solid and interesting argument.
- How does "Arete & Achilles" reflect what you've learned about paragraphing, particularly intro and conclusion paragraphs? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this paper? How would you revise it?

Assignment

This assignment is to **write a complete rough draft** of the paper you have been working on. First, go back and look at the outline you wrote last week, filling in any gaps that appear and double-checking your logic one more time. Make sure that your essay has a solid intro which includes the thesis statement and that every body paragraph begins with a clear sub-thesis which points back to the thesis. Your conclusion *should not* be a mere summary of the paper. This is a "rough draft" because you will not have time to fully revise it, but you should proofread (check grammar, spelling, punctuation) before submitting.