Writing an Introduction

An introduction should:

- Set the context of the essay
- Be about 10% of the total word count of your essay
- Refer directly to the assessment question/essay topic or thesis statement

Steps to writing your introduction

1. Introduce the topic

Use **key words** or **concepts** from your essay topic to provide context in your introduction. This can be done in one to two sentences. For example, to address the essay topic:

> "Discuss the impacts of the phenomenon of performance enhancing drugs in Australian professional sports on adolescent athletes."

the first sentence could go something like this:

> *Performance enhancing drugs have been shown to have a detrimental effect in the Australian sporting world since the 1980s as evidenced in the media and among professional sporting bodies (Fenanigan & Crawley, 2013)*.*

Three **key words** have been introduced here: 'performance enhancing drugs', 'Australian' and 'professional sports'. Your next sentences can expand on this information.

* While references are acceptable in an Introduction, keep them to a minimum. The reader should have the confidence that you are in command of the subject and that the writing is your voice.

2. Provide general background information

Introduce the other key words from your topic to prepare for your upcoming point of view, or thesis statement. You may want to define certain words at this point, for example:

> *Young adolescent athletes, generally aged between 14 and 18, are not immune to the prevalence of drug use. This is not only based on their awareness of its existence in professional sports, but their own attitudes towards performance enhancing drugs (Hagan, 2013).*

3. Narrow your focus (viewpoint/thesis statement)

Following the background information, narrow your focus to the specific area your paper will present. From the previous example, the key words from the original topic that narrow the focus are 'adolescent athletes.' They set the scene for the essay and lead the reader towards your specific angle on this subject. State the main argument or focus for the Body of your essay. This can either be a direct answer in response to the essay question, or a statement about the issue that is highlighted in your essay topic.

> *Drug taking in sport has only negative impacts on adolescent athletes with regard to their own potential moral code as professional sportspeople and also their propensity for participating in drug taking itself.*

It is common for the thesis statement to begin, '*This essay/paper argues that...,*' because this is the claim that you will defend in the Body of the paper. Suppose your essay topic is as follows: "Why are nurses more susceptible to chain smoking compared to other professionals?"
Your response could go something like this:

> *This essay argues that nurses are more susceptible to chain smoking than other professionals because of their excessive and stressful work demands and their poor work-life balance.*

CRICOS 00103D | RTO 4909 | TEQSA PRV12151 (Aust)

4. Outline the main points/areas to be discussed

The job of this part of the Introduction is to inform your reader specifically what your essay will cover. It is helpful to use signposting language here, particularly as the topic covers a few areas. For example:

This essay first examines impacts on the attitudes and aspirations of young athletes because of drug use in sport. Second, the essay outlines how these arise due to role modelling and exposure to drugs through sports clubs.



Example

Topic

Analyse the role of the MCH nurse working in partnership with the family to care for a child with a diagnosed developmental delay.

Introduction

Colour key: Background information Narrowing focus Thesis statement Outline of main ideas

Monitoring the growth and development of children at regular intervals allows for the early detection of developmental delay. One of the key aims of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nursing practice is the early detection and the referral of children with a developmental delay (Neil & Marcuson, 2011). In the transition from suspicion and concerns about their child's development, to the confirmation of the diagnosis of developmental delay, the lived experience for the family takes on a whole new chapter. Depending on the degree of severity and permanence of the developmental delay, families may face a rollercoaster journey of therapies, testing and appointments (Collster, 2009). Families may also face the loss of the sense of normality of their child eventually growing into an independent adult, as well as mounting financial burdens (Foster & McCauley, 2010). MCH nursing practice has a role to play in supporting families beyond the diagnosis, especially in the context of more major persistent delay where there is significant impact on the family. In the context of the impact on the family, this essay explores the question of what happens following a diagnosis of developmental delay and how MCH nurses can work collaboratively with families. Developmental delay is discussed generally rather than with reference to a specific type of delay, and the role of the MCH nurse (MCHN) in the care of the child is critically analysed along the spectrum of working in an expert role to working in partnership with the family.

(Adapted from LaTrobe University, 2014)

Related helpsheets

- Essay
- Understanding your Assessment Question
- Writing in an Academic Style