**Essay Openings and Closings**

There is a range of ways you can hook your reader with the introduction of your paper and leave your reader with something to think about at the conclusion of the paper.

**Introduction**

1. Start with an Attention-Getter

Avoid using rhetorical questions in your paper, especially in your introduction. A **rhetorical question** is a question asked in order to create a dramatic effect or to make a point rather than to get an answer. They make it look like you don’t know what you think about a topic, you are trying to fill space, and you haven’t learned anything about writing since 6th grade.

Here are some better ways to introduce and conclude your essays.

**Introduction Strategies**

ProvideBackground Information

* works well for literary analysis papers: provide general overview of story, book, play you’re writing about
* for nonliterary papers, you provide general information about your topic: you can include interesting facts, statistics, history about the topic

Tell a Story

* tell a story from your own experience
* find a real life story or historical account that relates to your topic
* use famous or not so famous stories from the news, tv, magazines
* use actual names and places and dates

Define a problem

* works well for a problem-solution essay
* state what the problem is in your own words

State the Issue or Topic

* give your personal views about the issue you are addressing
* tell exactly how you feel about the topic in a broad sense
* use “I” for this type of intro
* EX: your topic is smoking, give your feelings about the idea of smoking

Make a Surprising Statement

* tell your reader something they probably don’t know about the topic
* provide a surprising statistic
* present an uncommon comparison or contrast

Lead with a Quotation

* use a quote from a well-known expert on the subject
* provide a quote from a someone who has been affected by your topic

1. Write a Connector

A connector is a sentence that leads from your Attention-Getter to your last sentence in your introduction.

1. The Thesis Statement comes last.

Your thesis statement tells your reader the main idea of your paper. It should be all your reader needs to read to understand your argument.

**Conclusion**

Try the STAC approach to writing a conclusion. An effective conclusion contains all of these elements:

1. Start with a Transitional **Statement** or Phrase that summarizes your evidence
   * + Open your final paragraph with a good statement or phrase that will sort of "reintroduce" your topic.
     + AVOID: "All in all" or "In conclusion" or "Finally" or "To sum it all up." These are overused, cliché, and boring.
2. Restate Your **Thesis**.

* You can do this in the above statement as a transition.
* Use new wording for the thesis---say it in a fresh, new way.

1. **Attention**-Getter Loop. Write a sentence that ties back to your introduction.

You can…

--Offer Additional Analysis

* extend your topic by providing additional insights
* summarize and reflect on the results of your analysis or evaluation
* speculate about the future and what might happen next
* offer a solution

--Close with a Quotation (see above)

--Close with a Story (see above)

--Call your Reader to Action

* make a suggestion for something specific they can do
* ask them to participate in problem solving
* expect that readers will not just accept what you say, but also take action

1. Write a **clincher** sentence

* Leave your reader with a final comment or example that ends the paper in a memorable way.