

## Introduction

The introduction is an overview of the body—it focuses on the objectives of the argumentation. It constitutes the first 10% of a paper and consists of three sections: the context, the thesis, and the outline.

Because the reader's first impression will influence his or her perception of the rest of the paper, the introduction is your chance to establish your credibility as a writer.

### Context

The introduction's first task is to get the reader's attention. The opening lines of a text must therefore introduce the topic of the paper by providing interesting and relevant background information. Avoid broad, sweeping statements and obvious facts like: "Since the dawn of time, humans have needed food to survive."

#### Here are a few ways of getting the reader's attention:

Ask one or two thought-provoking questions.

Why is industrial expansion more important than the survival of valuable ecosystems? Last year, that kind of priority resulted in the death of six hundred thousand red-tailed swallows in Ungolu.

Challenge a popular opinion.

It is a commonly held belief that the declining population of red-tailed swallows is due to the nature of their mating rituals. However, the real threat to the survival of this species is the destruction of the Ungolu rainforest.

Start with a startling statement or fact.

Last year, over six hundred thousand red-tailed swallows died as a result of the destruction of their habitat. This represents the loss of more than half of the species' total population.

#### Here are a few ways of introducing the topic of the paper:

Define key terms.

The most immediate danger to the red-tailed swallow is clear-cutting, or the removal of all trees in a given territory. One of its devastating consequences is the destruction of natural habitats.

Provide a brief history of the topic.

The red-tailed swallow is found only in the Ungolu rainforest, which has been getting smaller every year due to human encroachment. This bird is a vital part of the Ungolu ecosystem, as it controls the population of the destructive corkscrew beetle.

Review the controversy or problem.

While environmentalists protest the destruction of the Ungolu rainforest for the sake of its wildlife, and particularly for the sake of the red-tailed swallow, the inhabitants of the area demand more land for cattle and living space, and require more wood to generate revenue.

To know more, see *Checkmate*, *The Little, Brown Handbook*, the *Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers*, or similar writing guides.

## Thesis

The introduction's second task is to establish the thesis, i.e. the goal of the paper. Will you prove the validity of a statement or answer a question? This must be obvious to the reader.

A strong thesis is clear and easy to find. It has three qualities: it is specific enough to be fully explored in the paper, it is argumentative, and it is explanatory. Simply saying that you agree or disagree with something is not enough.

The extinction of a species is bad.

The extinction of the red-tailed swallow is bad. (Specific)

The extinction of the red-tailed swallow must be prevented. (Argumentative)

The extinction of the red-tailed swallow must be prevented because it would have a devastating impact on the Ungolu rainforest. (Explanatory)

## Outline

The introduction's third task is to outline the logical progression of the paper by summarizing its content. In one or two sentences, it specifies the structure of the paper by listing its main ideas in the correct order.

**Here are a few ways of organizing your ideas:**

Adopt a linear outline by building each new idea on the previous one.

As this paper will show, the clear-cutting of the rainforest has already eliminated much of the natural habitat of the red-tailed swallow, thus reducing the population growth rate of a species that plays a vital part in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. Its extinction would result not only in the destruction of the rainforest, but in the destruction of the ecology that it shelters as well. What's more, the extinction of the red-tailed swallow is unnecessary—there are more ecological and long-lasting ways than logging to ensure the economic development of Ungolu.

Follow a binary outline by opposing two ideas (advantages and disadvantages, similarities and differences, etc.).

This paper will oppose the needs of the people of Ungolu and the needs of the rainforest's red-tailed swallow population in the hopes of finding a solution that would allow the survival of both parties. First, it will assess the current threats to the economic well-being of the people of Ungolu and identify ways to ensure a constant source of revenue. Second, it will assess the current threats to the natural habitat of the rainforest's red-tailed swallow population and identify ways to avoid its destruction.

Make a ternary outline by presenting arguments, counterarguments, and a nuanced position on a topic.

In this paper, we will first focus on the economic benefits that justify the current clear-cutting practices in Ungolu. We will then discuss the environmental risks that arise from and condemn these same practices, which have already begun to affect the balance of the rainforest's ecosystem. Finally, we will explore more ecological and long-lasting solutions that would ensure both the economic development of Ungolu and the protection of the rainforest and of its wildlife.

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## Example

**Context:** Effects of the destruction of the Ungolu rainforest

Why is industrial expansion more important than the survival of valuable ecosystems? Last year, that kind of priority resulted in the death of six hundred thousand red-tailed swallows in Ungolu. While environmentalists protest the destruction of the Ungolu rainforest for the sake of its wildlife, and particularly for the sake of the red-tailed swallow, the inhabitants of the area demand more land for cattle and living space, and require more wood to generate revenue. Although they insist that their society depends on logging practices, it does not justify the effects of these practices. Without a change in policy, the red-tailed swallow will most likely disappear by the end of this year. . . .

**Thesis:** Effects of the extinction of the red-tailed swallow

. . . The extinction of this species must be prevented because it would have a devastating impact on the Ungolu rainforest. . . .

**Outline:** Human encroachment, ecosystem survival, and possible solutions

. . . As this paper will show, the clear-cutting of the rainforest has already eliminated much of the natural habitat of the red-tailed swallow, thus reducing the population growth rate of a species that plays a vital part in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. Its extinction would result not only in the destruction of the rainforest, but in the destruction of the ecology that it shelters as well. What's more, the extinction of the red-tailed swallow is unnecessary—there are more ecological and long-lasting ways than logging to ensure the economic development of Ungolu.

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