Introductions

The introduction of your paper is the first impression you make on your reader. The introduction should be inviting and engaging, serving as the “drum roll” that culminates in your thesis statement.

The introduction needs to spark the reader’s interest, move gracefully towards the thesis statement, and finally present the thesis statement.

Four Elements essential to a good introduction:

(1) a hook

(2) some general discussion of the theme(s) you are exploring outside of the text, within literature, history, culture, human experience

(3) the formal introduction to the work you will be discussing, and how it relates to the theme(s) you are exploring

(4) a concise, clear, boldly stated thesis statement

Because the shape of the introduction moves from the general to the specific, you can envision it as a “funnel”:

After you do your analytical magic in the body of your essay, your conclusion returns to the sort of discussion you began in your introduction. The conclusion will reiterate the thesis with new conviction (gained from new insights gleaned though your analysis throughout the body paragraphs). Then you come full-circle by returning the reader to the general themes you brought up in the beginning of the paper. The conclusion thus has the shape of an upside-down funnel, and you end the essay outside of the text again, considering the relevance of your thesis and analysis in understanding life as a whole.
Conclusions

A Good Conclusion Should:

- stress the importance of your paper,
- give the essay a sense of completeness, and
- leave a final impression on the reader.

Suggestions:

- Answer the question "So What?" Show your readers why this paper was important. Show them that your paper was meaningful and useful.
- Synthesize, don't summarize
  - Don't simply repeat points made in your paper. The reader has already read it. Show the reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used were not random, but fit together.
- Redirect your readers
  - Give your reader something to think about. How can the reader use your paper in order to think about the "real" world? If your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general. Think globally.
- Create a new meaning
  - You don't have to give new information to create a new meaning. By demonstrating how your ideas work together, you can create a new picture. Often the sum of the paper is worth more than its parts.

Strategies:

- Echoing the introduction: Echoing your introduction can be a good strategy if it is meant to bring the reader full-circle. If you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay was helpful in creating a new understanding.
- Looking to the future: Looking to the future can emphasize the importance of your paper or redirect the readers' thought process. It may help them apply the new information to their lives or see things more globally.
- Posing questions: Posing questions, either to your readers or in general, may help your readers gain a new perspective on the topic, which they may not have held before reading your conclusion. It may also bring your main ideas together to create a new meaning.

Reminder:

- Do NOT simply restate your thesis or rehash your argument. Your conclusion should expand upon your argument; it should take us somewhere we haven't yet been.