Writing Effective Introductions

Purpose: Upon completion of this activity, students will be familiar with the various types of lead-ins, or introductions, used in academic essay.

We have all heard the saying “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” This is why we dress our best and are on our best behavior when meeting someone for the first time, such as in a job interview or a first date. First impressions are just as important in your writing, for this is when your readers meet you for the first time and begin forming opinions about you and your subject matter. You have only a few sentences to hook your reader, tell him or her what your paper will be about, and present your opinion on your topic. Those first few sentences—the hook (or the lead-in or the introduction)—are quite important for putting your reader in a receptive frame of mind.

1. To begin, go to the WRC’s reception desk and check out the book *English Skills with Readings* by John Langan. You will need a student ID card or driver’s license to check this book out for use in the WRC.

2. Next, turn to the section entitled “Essay Development” and read the model essay and section on writing an introductory paragraph. Read to become familiar with the common methods of introduction that can be used in academic essays as well as for understanding of the purpose of a strong introduction.

3. When you are finished with the textbook, read through the thesis statements and the preview of the main points listed below (from www.pearsoned.ca), and write a lead-in, or introduction, with a tone appropriate to the topic. Please do your work on a separate sheet.

(1)___________________________________________________________________________________________
I decided to quit my job at a local sawmill, and come back to college, because management frequently assigned unscheduled overtime, always paid low wages, and often ignored safety regulations. (Thanks to Chris Barr.)

(2)___________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________.

Even in cars equipped with air bags, you should still wear your seat belt because you can avoid the neck and spinal-column injuries possible even at low speeds and the fatal injuries possible in high-speed crashes. (Thanks to Greg Henderson.)

(3)___________________________________________________________________________________________

To be a successful film actor, you need to know exactly what to do when you hear the words “Rolling,” “Speed,” and “Action.” (Thanks to Michael D. White.)
If you want to avoid the drunks you sometimes run into at parties, pay close attention to the way someone approaching you walks and talks. (Thanks to Aaron Smallbone.)

Air bags in cars reduce neither accidents nor insurance costs. (Thanks to Andrew MacLeod.)

4. Once you have written lead-ins for the above, choose one of the following to complete:
   a. Take time to write a one-page reflection about what you have learned. What is the purpose of a strong introduction? What do good writers need to know about introductory paragraphs? How do you usually write your introductions? Will your way of writing introductions change now that you have read about writing strong introductions? How?
   b. Review the introductory paragraph of the paper you are currently working on in light of the information you have just read about writing successful introductory paragraphs. Revise that paragraph so that it makes a strong first impression.

5. Review your reflection or your current paper with an instructor or tutor in the WRC, and see if the instructor or tutor has any additional advice. Then, have that person sign and date this sheet.

Attach a confirmation sheet or get a signature below:

Instructor Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________