**Methods for Developing Introductions**

Lively, interesting introductions rarely just fall from the sky, a gift from the gods. You must bring beginnings to life. So apply the same prewriting methods to this paragraph that you do to the body of the essay: Plan on clustering, listing, freewriting, and so forth to discover ideas.

There are at least 10 basic methods for developing introductory paragraphs:

1. **Description:** Create a series of vivid images—perhaps three or four. Consider these images as quick snapshots rather than a continuous story. Use one sentence for each image, and develop each with actions, specific words, and sensory details (sight, sound, and touch, especially).

   Irritated customers shouting orders, pans clanging together, shirts soaked through with sweat—another shift at the deli is well under way. Employees are racing to keep up with the orders. Ben is slicing bread too fast for safety, the bread knife barely missing his palm as he opens one loaf after another. Ellen slips on a wet spot on the tile floor and jams her wrist against a wall. Ramon mutters, "Damn it!" as he scalds himself in the sink. A delicatessen in a lunch rush can be a hectic, nerve-wracking place. Employees who don't want to end up in the emergency room on their first day need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

2. **Narration:** Tell a brief story.

   Shawn came into the restaurant cracking jokes, kidding customers and fellow employees alike, and generally having a good time. Everyone liked him right away and could see that he would be fun to have around, but in the middle of his third day on the job, during the lunch rush, we lost him for good. I was taking an order at table seven, when all the loud talking, jostling, and eating stopped abruptly. Everyone in the restaurant heard Shawn scream as he lost the first joint of his little finger to the meat slicer. He learned the hard way how dangerous this job can be. Shawn's experience illustrates that employees who don't want to end up in the emergency room on their first day need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

3. **Comparison/contrast:** Compare or contrast your topic with something your readers would be familiar with. You might also compare through a metaphor or simile.

   Although I have never been on a cattle ranch, I think I know what it feels like to be caught in the middle of a stampede. I don't usually think of my customers as cows (though some do eat like animals), but in the middle of a lunch rush in our deli, with the restaurant packed from the front door to the counter and frustrated people calling out orders, employees might feel like they are about to be trampled. The pressure during a rush from customers and management alike can cause employees to move faster than what is safe, so if they don't want to end up in the emergency room on their first day, employees need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

4. **Cause and effect:** Explain causes leading to or effects leading from the topic. Or create a fictional scenario—what might happen relating to your topic.

   Let's talk about Alien, a fictitious new employee at the deli, who is not paying much attention to his trainer as she talks about procedures and hazards on the job. He halfway listens as she tells him about how fast he will be expected to move in about an hour, when the lunch rush hits. "Right, yeah, OK," he says, paying more attention to Kanye West's rap music in his headphones. An hour passes, people begin flooding in, and Alien begins to panic. Trying to carry a tray full of salads too quickly, he slips on the tile floor and lands flat on
his back, knocking himself unconscious. Unless you are careful, you could be Alien. Employees who don't want to end up in the emergency room on their first day need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

5. **Definition:** Briefly define some concept important to your topic.
   
   Self-preservation is an instinct that tries to keep animals out of harm's way, and it works pretty well for most of them, except for some humans. These are the people—maybe you know some like this—who refuse to listen to good advice or even to warnings that might save them from much misery. On the other hand, when a reasonable person has the opportunity to learn about job hazards that might endanger her, she listens, because that good old self-preservation instinct kicks in. In this restaurant, new employees have to be careful; if they don't want to end up in the emergency room on their first day, they need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

6. **Persuasion:** Appeal to your readers’ self-interest by showing them what they have to gain by reading your essay.
   
   No sane person enjoys pain, and few people can afford the recovery time that serious injury on the job requires. All new employees at this restaurant get a careful orientation that includes warnings on how to avoid accidents. Intelligent people pay attention. Smart employees, who don't want to end up in the emergency room on their first day, need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

7. **Question(s):** Ask your readers several questions that relate to your thesis.
   
   Would you like to keep all of your body parts intact today? How much do you value your eyesight or that brain that keeps your body functioning? With all of the activity in a deli, employees rushing about, impatient customers pressuring you to hurry, and management barking orders, accidents can happen when you least expect them. Smashing your head on a slippery tile floor, splashing caustic chemicals into your eyes, and slicing off fingers are just a few of the dangers you can encounter. If you don't want to end up in the emergency room on your first day here, you need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

8. **Background information:** Give information or history about your topic that would help orient your readers or show them why the topic is important to you.
   
   As a deli manager, I like to keep my fellow employees healthy, and as a reasonably good-hearted human being, I don't like to see people suffer. During our peak hours, we only run five employees in the front and back of the house, even though we usually need more. In order for the operation to work, everyone has to do his or her job efficiently and with some enthusiasm. If even one person just gets “the slows” or, worse, is injured, the rest of the crew suffers. Therefore, to help the restaurant, all employees must be aware of the potential dangers in working at this deli.

9. **Startling information:** Give facts or statistics that might seem unusual dramatic to your reader. Or create graphic examples that would cause emotional response in your reader.
   
   A day rarely passes without some kind of accident in our deli. Most of the time the problem is small and the hurt to a person slight. But who wants even a little pain? It is bad enough to deal with small glass cut and scalds from hot coffee, but when business picks up, the big accidents follow. New employees especially run the risk of breaking a wrist or slicing off a body part. Therefore, employees who don't want to end up in the emergency room on their first day need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.
10. **Reversal**: Begin your introduction moving in one direction, but switch direction as you approach your thesis sentence.

   Working in a deli can be great fun. Employees dress casually, no suits and ties here. Most of us are young adults with plenty happening in our lives. I enjoy listening to Felipe brag about his date last night (knowing that at least half of what he says is a lie) and watching Gabrielle and Nathan pester each other over nothing, like sister and brother. Also, when business picks up, it is a good feeling to work closely as an efficient team, depending on one another as we get the job done. But the work is not all play. There are real, serious hazards in this business. I've come to realize that employees who don't want to end up in the emergency room on their first day here need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

11. **Combination**: Focus on any one introductory paragraph method to get started, but then include other methods, as many of the paragraphs above do. For example, number 10 uses description within the reversal strategy. Number 9 includes a question, description, and cause/effect. Number 8 explains in part through cause and effect. Almost all paragraphs, including introductions, are developed through examples.

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