

LESSON: **WRITING INTRODUCTIONS**

Time Needed to Complete Activities:

You will need 30 minutes per activity over the course of four practices. Writing the introduction will take an entire practice. Then you can spend future personal time or practices revising the intro and writing the rest of the speech.

Rationale:

This activity begins by looking at an intro as a whole and then breaking it down into its parts. We will examine each part individually and work toward understanding the order and importance of the parts of an intro. Eventually, we will put all the parts together to create a single cohesive body of writing that is the complete intro. The following activities are designed to help students understand the individual purposes of the sentences in the intro and the order in which they are arranged. Each activity builds upon the last and requires students to transfer the skills they used previously to complete the next task. These activities are written in a manner that teaches the skills at the most basic level and are meant to be used with students who have no previous exposure to this content. However, each activity could be modified to be more difficult and provide review or practice for advanced writers and speakers.

Detailed Procedures:

Pick a topic! Have the students brainstorm and select a topic that they would like to write a speech about, as that is the eventual goal. They will have this topic all year, and it should be something they are passionate about and that is relevant to society. This could include personal issues that affect a large portion of society or a more environmental issue that affects the global community. Why would your audience care about the issue if you yourself don't care about the issue? An example of a personal topic may be "people's aversion to criticism and their tendency to feel attacked." Where as an environmental topic may look like "the lack of access to clean water and the implications on people affected".

Sample topic for this lesson's purposes:

We as a society have a focus on perfection and are not teaching our children that it is okay to make mistakes.

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After the students have picked a topic, it's time to start considering the structure of an intro. A good intro includes *four* crucial parts:

- 1. Attention Getting Device (AGD)**
- 2. Issue Statement**
- 3. Thesis**
- 4. Roadmap**

Each part has an individual purpose and contributes to setting the stage for the rest of the speech. The first step is to show the students a completed intro that contains all four components. Read the intro to the students or have them read it on their own.

Example Intro:

For as long as I can remember, I have been helping in the kitchen. My aunt taught me how to bake when I was a very young girl, and I have been baking with her and also on my own ever since. Despite this, I am still a hot mess in the kitchen. To this day, I cannot measure powdered sugar without getting it everywhere, and no matter how hard I try, I can never get a level measurement. So most of the time I just eyeball it and it works out. Okay. Sometimes it works out. But this is a trend I feel we need to be seeing more of in society. Our focus for so long has been on being perfect and leveled that we forgot that mistakes happen. No matter how many times you run the powdered sugar through a sieve, there will always be a lump. Imperfections and mistakes happen, and instead of trying to be perfect and giving up, we need to learn how to adapt to our new situation. So let's measure and weigh out our causes to see why we have such a focus on perfection, then we'll mix together all our ingredients to look at the implications of this perfectionist attitude, before finally putting the icing on the cake to put our final product to the test with some ways to adapt to our mistakes.

Note: this intro was written for a high school speech. It is perfectly acceptable for a roadmap to include the *first*, *second*, and *third* or *first*, *next*, and *finally* transitional words to tell the audience the order of the speech without mentioning a vehicle for the AGD in your roadmap or transitions. It is a common practice used by advanced speakers, but it is not required. At the middle school level, it is reasonable to write a roadmap like the example above without the vehicle (metaphor) because you are still learning how to write a speech. The vehicle should be a goal to work toward, not an expectation for a new speaker. See the transition lesson and activity for more on how to write all types of transitions.

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Now that students have heard or read the intro, it's time to break down each part. First, show the students the color coded example of the intro and have them read it in individual parts instead of as a whole intro.

[YELLOW] For as long as I can remember, I have been helping in the kitchen. My aunt taught me how to bake when I was a very young girl, and I have been baking with her and also on my own ever since. Despite this, I am still a hot mess in the kitchen. To this day, I cannot measure powdered sugar without getting it everywhere, and no matter how hard I try, I can never get a level measurement. So most of the time I just eyeball it and it works out. Okay. Sometimes it works out. | [BLUE] But this is a trend I feel we need to be seeing more of in society. Our focus for so long has been on being perfect and leveled that we forgot that mistakes happen. No matter how many times you run the powdered sugar through a sieve, there will always be a lump. | [PINK] Imperfections and mistakes happen, and instead of trying to be perfect and giving up, we need to learn how to adapt to our new situation. | [GREEN] So let's measure and weigh out our causes to see why we have such a focus on perfection, then we'll mix together all our ingredients to look at the implications of this perfectionist attitude, before finally putting the icing on the cake to put our final product to the test with some ways to adapt to our mistakes.

Alternative roadmap without the metaphor (vehicle):

[GREEN] First, let's discuss the causes of the focus on perfection.
Next, we'll discuss the implications of the perfectionist attitude.
Before finally, finding some ways to adapt to our mistakes.

After they've read the broken down intro, provide the names for each part of the intro: **Attention Getting Device** [YELLOW], **Issue Statement** [BLUE], **Thesis** [PINK], and **Roadmap** [GREEN]. Then, provide the definition and an explanation of what each sentence does. Below is a list of the four parts of an intro, a short explanation of what they are, their purpose in the intro, and how the example provided uses each part. After you break down each part for the students, move on to the three activities to give students a chance to apply the concepts of the intro in a practical way.

ATTENTION GETTING DEVICE (AGD)

The attention getting device is the first sentence, or first couple sentences, of the speech that draws the audience in and "gets" their attention. It typically comes in the form of an anecdote, a joke, a famous quote, or even a statistic. The first sentences are the first impression of the speech, so they should reflect the arc of the speech. For instance, if you are talking about a water shortage, your AGD should have something to do with water. You could make a joke about water or tell a funny story about water excess, which you can turn around and use to point out the issues with

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that story later in the speech. The humor used helps draw the audience in and make them feel more comfortable and connected to you, the speaker. The acknowledgement of the problem can help bring forth realization in your audience. If they feel connected to the story or joke, they may reflect on the issue easier, even if they otherwise do not relate to it. Make your AGD something that you can work with later. You don't want an AGD that is so specific or convoluted that you can't use it anywhere else in the speech because it requires too much explanation or there's nothing left to tell or the joke isn't capable of being told in a different fashion. It's about finding the right story or joke that you can relate to yourself and the topic, then telling it a little at a time to keep the audience engaged and wanting to hear more. The possibilities of what you can use as your AGD are endless since each of your experiences are different from someone else's. However, the AGD and the topic need to be related in some form or fashion. So you cannot use a random story you find funny to just break the ice. It needs to break the ice *and* be able to relate to the topic. The relation does not have to happen in the sentences that are the AGD. The connection can be made by the following sentence, the *issue statement*. The AGD serves as the backdrop for the whole speech. It's the *first*, but not the last, reason you give the audience to listen to your speech. The best AGDs are universal commonalities or possibilities—meaning whatever joke, story, quote, statistic, etc., you use has happened to you, but could happen to anyone. You are essentially asking your audience to meet you on common ground so that you can present the rest of the argument on a level playing field. In the provided example, the AGD is a story about baking, but it also mentions not being perfect and making mistakes. The topic is about mistakes and perfectionist attitudes, something we all suffer from as a society, but the story is about baking, something we have all either tried and can relate to or know enough about to understand its connection to perfectionism.

ISSUE STATEMENT

The issue statement is the second part of the intro. Sometimes it's the second sentence, but not always, because it depends on how long the AGD is. It always comes after the AGD and serves as the connection. While you introduce the topic in the most general of terms in the AGD, you specify the topic in the issue statement. The issue statement tells you exactly what the issue is and how it is connected to your AGD. The issue statement addresses what is happening but does not address how to fix it. In the example intro, the issue statement connects to the AGD by pointing to the attitude of "just winging it" that the speaker uses in baking as something we need more of in society, *because* the perfectionist attitude is a problem. Then the issue statement clearly identifies that we as a society focus on perfection, and we have forgotten that mistakes are a part of life. The issue statement first connects to the AGD by addressing one aspect of the AGD like eyeballing measurements, and then it states the problem in decisive language so there is no confusion about what the issue is. The last part of the issue statement is another sentence that relates to the AGD that the audience can understand. In our example, we use the idea of lumps in our powdered sugar,

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because anyone who bakes knows how hard it is to get “perfect” powdered sugar even after sifting it, and everyone can understand that lumps are bad, so the line about still having them resonates with everyone on some level.

THESIS

The thesis is the third part of an intro. It is one sentence that comes directly after identifying the issue. The thesis is the part of the speech that takes the problem and addresses how to fix it. It consists of two parts, the *issue* and the *solution*. The first part takes the issue addressed in the issue statement and restates it to keep reminding the audience of the issue. The more the audience is reminded of the issue, the more they will be reflecting on it throughout the speech. Restating it in the thesis juxtaposes it with the solution so that the audience will reflect on both. The second part of the thesis is the solution. The solution is an overarching idea of what would make the situation better. It is not specific, because you will later give specific examples of how to accomplish the solution. In our example, we restate the problem and then give the solution by telling the audience that instead of doing what we’re currently doing, we should be doing something else.

ROADMAP

The roadmap is the last part of the intro and is the “map” of the speech. The roadmap tells the audience where the speech is headed, including the main points you’re going to address. A speech is generally made up of three points, often a cause/problem, effect/implication, and a solution. In the roadmap, you give the audience a brief overview of the points you will make and the order in which you will address them. The roadmap does not give specific causes, implications, or solutions—that will be covered in the body of the speech. Just like the solution in the thesis, the causes, effects, and solutions should be general ideas. In our example, we tell the audience we will discuss the causes of the perfectionist mentality, the implications of this mentality, and the solutions to adjusting the mentality. The roadmap should have transitional words or phrases involved to tell the audience the direction and sequence of the speech. Transitional words like *first*, *second*, and *finally* can be used to identify the order of the points, but sometimes the roadmap can use transitional phrases that are related to the AGD. In this case, the transitions act as a vehicle to carry the AGD throughout the speech. The roadmap is very important when determining the organization of the speech and can help determine the transitions for the rest of the speech.

ACTIVITIES

- Have an intro written that you can break down with the students like the one above. As the coach, break the intro into the **Attention Getting Device (AGD)** [YELLOW], **Issue Statement** [BLUE], **Thesis** [PINK], and **Roadmap** [GREEN] to show the students each part of an intro. Then you can separate the students into groups or have them work on their own. Give each student/group a different intro from the one you showed. Using highlighters (or pens/pencils), students should identify the different parts of the speech in the colors above or colors of their choosing. You can have the students make their own key if you can't provide all of those colors to all of the students. If you're using a pen or pencil, have them put quotation marks around the "AGD", underline the **Issue Statement**, circle the **Thesis**, and box the **Roadmap**. You can then switch the intros around and either have them repeat the process with a new intro or have them check the work of the other students. Repeat as many times as you want to provide plenty of examples of structure and writing.
- Write several intros of your own and type up all of the parts separately, cut them out, and have the students order the parts of the intro. You can color code and add labels to the parts if you want to make it easier for students who are brand new and have never even seen an intro. You can then make it harder. Start by removing the colors and just label the parts to see if they remember the name orders. Then you can remove the labels and colors and see if just by reading the parts they can put them in order.
- At this point, you can have students start writing their intros for their own speeches based on the topics they chose. Give them the **Introduction Pyramid** (page 9) and have them start to fill it in with the different parts of the intro starting at the bottom. First, they will decide on their general topic that the speech is about. Then in the next step, they will write an idea for their AGD. They do not have to write the AGD yet, that comes when you write the intro as a smooth paragraph. However, they should be brainstorming what the AGD could be and what they want to address in it. In the next space, have them write the issue and issue statement. In the fourth space, have them write the thesis statement. In the last sections at the very top, write the three points they will speak about. After they've filled out the triangle, have them complete the **Introduction Worksheet** (page 8) to outline the sentences of the intro. After they've completed both documents they are ready to start writing! Students should start by writing the issue statement and the thesis statement as complete sentences, not just outlined ideas. Then write the AGD as a full story. It should be written exactly how

you're going to tell it. Remember this can be a personal story or a story about someone important to the topic or a quick anecdote. Lastly, students should write their roadmap. Be specific, tell the audience exactly what the point is about not just that it's the causes, effects, and solutions. But instead use phrases like "first we'll discuss the causes of **Blank Issue**" or "finally we will look at how to solve **Blank Issue**." After students have written all of the parts and put them into one cohesive paragraph, they will have completed writing the intro!

NAME: _____

Intro Worksheet

1. My general purpose is to (check one):

- inform persuade motivate entertain

2. The kind of attention-getting device I plan to use is:

- humor quotation story personal experience
 startling information rhetorical question

3. Write your attention-getter: _____

.....
.....
.....

4. Write your specific purpose: _____

.....
(Ex. Today, I want to share with you three objects that mean the world to me.)

5. Write your preview statement: _____

.....
(ex. Three of my favorite things are my clarinet, my book of poems, and my Marvin the Martian.)

6. I will organize my speech:

- chronologically spatially topically sequentially

Explain: _____

.....
.....

7. The first object I will present is _____

Description: _____

Received from: _____

Meaning: _____

Other details: _____

.....

Introduction Pyramid

