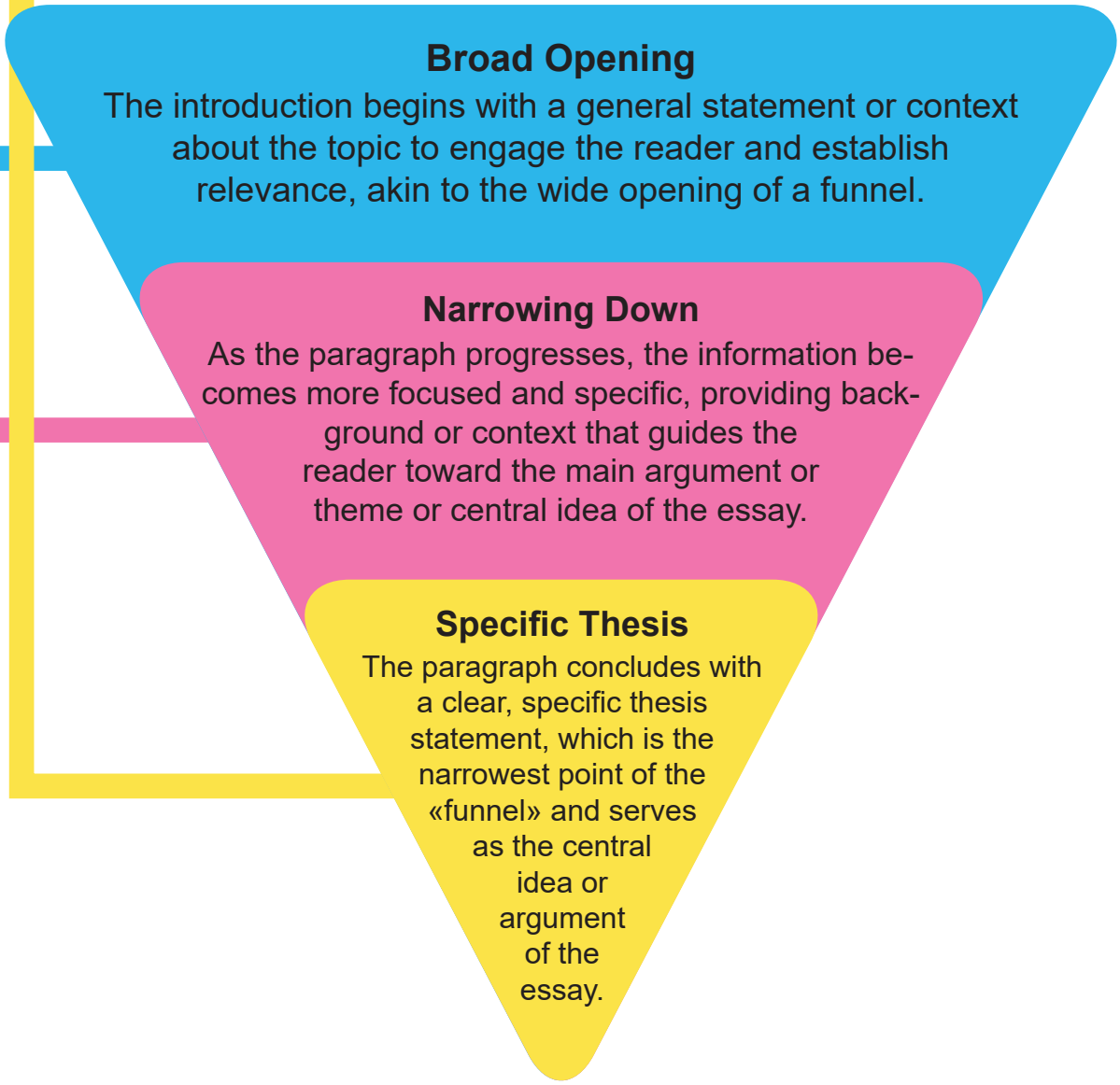
The introductory paragraph

should be engaging enough that the reader feels compelled to keep reading.

An engaging and well-written introduction generally has 3 elements:

- **Hook**
- **Background information**
- **Thesis statement**



The term **"funnel approach"** is a strong visual representation of how to write an introductory paragraph.

By starting broad and gradually narrowing to a specific focus.

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HOOK

EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE HOOKS

Effective

SURPRISING FACT OR STATISTIC
Share a striking or little-known fact related to your topic.

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTION
Ask a question that challenges assumptions or sparks curiosity.

RELEVANT QUOTATION
Begin with a quote from a well-known figure or text that resonates with your topic. The quotation must be connected to your argument.

DESCRIPTION OF A VIVID SCENE
Paint a mental picture to immerse the reader in your topic.

ANECDOTE OR EVENT RECENTLY DISCUSSED IN THE NEWS

There are many more possibilities. **Writers are encouraged to explore credible writing resources online**, *like university writing centres or other reputable writing platforms, to see the types of hooks they suggest for academic essays.*

Ineffective

OVERUSED EXPRESSION
"Since the dawn of time, people have always wondered about the meaning of life. In this essay, I will discuss this important topic in great detail."

OVERLY GENERAL
"In today's society…"

HOOK SEEMS UNRELATED TO THE TOPIC
"Chocolate cake is a delicious dessert loved by many. In this essay, I will explore the causes of climate change."

Many phrases used to start an essay are ineffective, overly general, or simply unengaging. For instance, the phrase "since the dawn of time…" lacks specificity and fails to captivate the reader.

Other examples of phrases to avoid include:

"Since the beginning of time/history mankind…"
"Everyone/we all…"
"So-and-so dictionary defines ____ as…"

These phrases are overly broad and uninteresting. Instructors are likely to view them as lacking meaningful contribution to your paper.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This second element of the introductory paragraph provides **the necessary background information that helps the reader transition smoothly** from the engaging hook to the central argument (thesis).

Without it, the essay might feel disjointed or abrupt.

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THESIS STATEMENT

A strong thesis will clearly introduce the **topic** and the **structure** of the whole essay.

For example, these two are ineffective thesis statements:

1. A **vague** thesis statement:

Your instructor asked you to write an essay. **Do not state the obvious!**

This is **too vague.**

"~~In this essay,~~ ~~I will talk~~ about the causes of World War I, which was a very important war."

In an academic essay, writers should **avoid using personal pronouns** such as "I", "We", "Our".

Announcing the topic with a purpose statement such as: "The purpose of this essay is to…" **is not an effective thesis statement**.

Revised version: *"World War I greatly impacted women's fashion as it slowly introduced lighter fabrics and a new interpretation of the feminine silhouette."*

2. A **poorly written** thesis:

"~~In this essay,~~ ~~I will~~ compare two ways to treat skin cancer."

Do not announce. Find a way to introduce the two treatments and the points of comparison.

Revised version: *"To treat skin cancer, radiation therapy and chemotherapy are two possible treatments that work differently and cause various side effects."*

An effective thesis statement is generally placed at or near the end of your introduction. It clearly presents a position on the subject that your essay can support or illustrate.

Key takeaways

Your introduction is your **first chance to impress your readers**:
1. An effective introduction has three key elements: **a hook, context, and a thesis**.
2. **Do not** use trite expressions in your HOOK or in your THESIS.
3. **Do not** announce your topic with a purpose statement.

The thesis statement is the most important sentence of your introduction. **It provides clear information to the reader about the topic and the strategy used to develop that topic**.

Early in your writing process, **your thesis might be a work in progress**. Since your body paragraphs will support the thesis, **many writers prefer to draft the body paragraphs first** and then go back to the drafted thesis and revise it.

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