**Writing Introductions
Prepared by Pam Wright**

**An introduction to an essay often includes three elements:**

1. Something to attract readers’ attention—get them interested. This element is usually at the beginning of the essay.

Example:
“The composition class had 40 petitioners, but the instructor could give petition cards to only three people,” sighed the frustrated student who needed the class to graduate.

1. A “bridge” between the interesting beginning and the thesis statement. The bridge indicates how the interesting beginning relates to the topic of the paper.

Example:
This complaint was common during the first week of the semester when many students were shut out of classes necessary for their academic programs.

1. The thesis. The thesis states the controlling idea of the paper. It is often one sentence, but may be several. Everything you include in your paper must be related to your thesis in some way.

Example:
During their final semester, more graduating students must be allowed to enroll in courses that are required for their degree.

Writing introductions is hard. Often the hardest part is the interesting beginning. Too many student papers have weak beginnings. Here are some ways to begin your paper. Each type has one or more examples.

**A Controversial Statement**

I hate baseball!

Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent.

**An Element of Surprise**

Not many people are aware that Chicago, not Warsaw, is actually the biggest “Polish” city in the world.

Soon after I arrived at Crossgatates (not immediately, but after a week or two, just when I seemed to be getting into the routine of the school life) I began wetting my bed.

**Contradiction**

Light is neither a wave, not a field, not even particles—its nature is unknown and incomprehensible.

It is a miracle that New York exists at all. The whole thing is implausible.

**Statistics**

Have a minute? Good. Because that may be all it takes to save the life of a child—your child. Accidents kill nearly 8000 children under age 15 each year. And for every fatality, 42 more children are admitted to hospitals for treatment. Yet such deaths and injuries can be avoided through these easy steps parents can take right now. You don't have a minute to lose.

**A Figure of Speech**

The brain is like a house of billions of chambers.

**Quotation**

“Liberty is to faction what air is to fire.” When he wrote those words, James Madison clearly expected the faction-ridden nation he helped found to go right on producing special interest groups constantly pressing for advantage.

**Reference to Current Event**

When two Japanese computer firms were caught in 1983 attempting to buy secrets from IBM Corporation, the scandal demonstrated the desperation of companies trying to keep up with the computer giant.

**Proof of Authority**

A few years ago I wrote a book which dealt in part with the difficulties of the English in India.

**A Rhetorical Question**

If sanity and insanity exist, how shall we know them?

**Irony or Sarcasm**

One of the most unfortunate by-products of the recent running boom has been the glorification of the lowly foot, an organ previously considered obscene.

**Personal Experience or Note**

When I was still a boy, I came to the conclusion that there were three grades of thinking; since I was later to claim thinking as my hobby, I came to an even stranger conclusion—namely, that I myself could not think at all.

**A Short, Engaging Proposition**

Boyhood is the most complex and incomprehensible thing.