

Sample Openings

The sample opening paragraph below, from a student paper on mother-child interaction, illustrates some of the observations above.

Investigation into the different ways that mothers and children interact **has helped researchers understand** attachment patterns and assess development in infants and children. **How** a mother shows affection towards an infant, how her emotions and personality **affect** infant-mother attachment, and patterns of attachment in different cultures are all important clues in understanding the infant's later behavior and development. **With this information, researchers can** determine whether an avoidant or anxiously attached infant will turn into a difficult child or adolescent and understand what will help the mother and infant form a healthy relationship.

<theoretical importance
<The problem: How X affects Y
<practical importance

In the sample openings below, how good a job did the authors do? Is the problem clear? Is it clear why it is important? Discuss with your partner what you think works and do not work in the different ways that the authors below presented their research problems. Did the authors just say that their topics are important, or did they provide reasons to try to convince you?

Sample #1

Crafting persuasive written arguments is an important writing skill (Fulkerson, 1996). Organizing text as arguments is central to a number of writing genres, including academic, business, expository, and persuasive writing (Gilbert, 1997; Rottenberg, 1988; Toulmin, Rieke, & Janik, 1979). Furthermore, Wiley and Voss (1999) suggested that producing written arguments helps individuals synthesize and deepen the comprehension of texts. One key component of argumentative writing is the consideration of counterarguments to one's position. By definition, a counterargument presents reasons why one's position might not be true or advisable. Consideration of counterarguments is important for two reasons. First, a meta-analysis by O'Keefe (1999) found that texts that considered and rebutted counterarguments were more persuasive than texts that did not (unless the text was selling a product). Because counterarguments may occur to the reader, O'Keefe concluded that raising and rebutting counterarguments on balance enhance persuasiveness. Second, many normative models of good thinking involve the ability to consider and evaluate alternative viewpoints (Baron, 1988; Ennis, 1987, 1995; Scriven, 1976). For both these reasons, researchers regard the consideration of counterarguments as an important aspect of good writing (see Santos & Santos, 1999, for a review).

<the process is important

<the sub-process is important

Nussbaum, E. M. & Kardash, C. (2005). The Effects of Goal Instructions and Text on the Generation of Counterarguments During Writing. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 97*, 157-169.

Sample #2

A fundamental question for professionals involved in the selection, training, evaluation and hiring of simultaneous interpreters is that of what interpreters know that bilinguals do not. Do simultaneous interpreters know different strategies for allocating attentional and memory resources? For making sentence processing more efficient? For bringing prior knowledge to bear on comprehension? Answers to these questions are important in that they can provide the principles on which to base assessment of proficiency and aptitude, planning of training, and on-going improvement of professional performance.

<the process is important in practice

Although simultaneous interpreting has received increasing attention as an object of study (Mackintosh, 1985; Henry & Henry, 1987; Gile, 1988), unfortunately little of it has been in the form of reliable experimental research (Gile, 1988). Consequently, precious little is known about the differences between experienced and novice interpreters' performance, and nothing at all is known about any possible differences in the way they go about carrying out the task (Dillinger, 1989). Two sets of opinions, however, have emerged on this issue.

<the process is important for theory, too

Dillinger, M. (1994). Comprehension during Interpreting: What do Interpreters know that Bilinguals don't? In: S. Lambert & B. Moser-Mercer (Eds.), *Bridging the gap: Empirical research in simultaneous interpretation* (pp. 155-189). Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.