Introductions and Conclusions

Plato once said, "Every discourse, like a living creature, should be so put together that it has its own body and lacks neither head nor feet, middle nor extremities, all composed in such a way that they suit both each other and the whole." When you have a good introduction and conclusion in your papers, both you and the reader are satisfied by the completion of your thoughts.

Writing the Introduction:

Even a good piece of writing may be left unread if it has a weak opening paragraph. So, here are some ways you can start:

- A brief story or description, using vivid language
- A powerful quotation (not one that is overused)
- A thought-provoking question or a startling fact or statistic (but nothing offensive or biased)
- An opinion

Along with opening in a creative way, you will want to:

- Announce your topic clearly
- Engage your reader's interest
- Give necessary background information (Sometimes much is needed when the reader is not familiar with the subject. In this case you would list some examples or explain how the issue or problem has risen.)
- Focus the reader's attention on what is to follow

Usually, introductions start off with general statements and become specific, ending with the thesis statement for the paper.

Writing the Conclusion:

The conclusion should match the style, effectiveness, and subject of the introduction. If you start off strong, end in a powerful way.

When writing the conclusion:

- Start off somewhat specific and become general towards the end (restate the main idea, discussing its significance and its implications for the bigger picture)
- Wrap up the piece of writing in an interesting and meaningful way
- Briefly summarize the main points if paper is long and complex
- Give the reader your strongest impression of the issue
- Do not state the obvious-end with a unique quotation, an anecdote, a question or an opinion that leave the reader thinking
- If further investigation needs to be done, recommend a direction that this should take (without using "I" or "me")

Remember that you can be flexible—it's your paper, so be yourself!