Writing the Introduction

“Do not wait until the conditions are perfect to begin.
Beginning makes the conditions perfect.”

--Alan Cohen

The dreaded first sentence…

- Don’t write the first sentence first. Add it later when you know what your essay is about. Yes, I’m basically giving you permission to procrastinate!
- The first sentence will introduce your topic and preview the issue that will become the focus of your essay
- It’s a delicate balance between a general introduction to an idea without being mind-blowingly expansive
  - Avoid phrases like “in the history of humankind…” (I BEG YOU to avoid these phrases)
  - Keep it to one sentence—that will curb the temptation to explain the topic’s relevance in universal terms

Introduce the authors

- Take 2-3 sentences to introduce the authors and the titles of their essays that you will be discussing
- Put the title in quotation marks: “Always Be Optimizing”
- Give each author their own sentence
- Include a brief summary (same sentence) of their essay
  - Focus this summary on what about the reading is important to your essay. Ignore the other stuff.
- Don’t include a quotation here unless its super pithy (2-4 words) and going to be amazingly important to your essay
- After this, you will refer to the authors by last names only—and you won’t need to repeat the essay title again either—unless you are analyzing it as a part of a focused discussion

Build towards your thesis

- Now that you have introduced the authors, begin the move towards your argument
- You might pose some tentative questions that your paper will work toward answering, allowing the reader to understand implicitly what might be at stake in such an issue
- You might introduce a key term that needs explanation before your thesis
- 1-3 sentences …

Your Thesis Statement

- Here is your argument, a debatable statement, and the idea that your essay will be pursuing
- Do not paraphrase or quote the essay prompt directly (Expos essay prompts are too general to be a thesis statement)
- Use the terms that will be important in your paragraphs; you don't need to define them now—that will be something for your reader to look forward to!
- Be specific
- Associate the author's names with their arguments. You are entering a conversation