

The Epic Voiceover

Wherein the introduction begins too broadly

Since the dawn of civilisation, humans have disagreed over many things. Wars have been fought over religious differences; people have developed complex weaponry with which to kill each other over fine distinctions between cultures which, from the outside, seem broadly similar. Throughout the bloodbath of history, conflict has been more prevalent than peace. The debate between smooth and crunchy peanut butter is no different...

In writing classes, students are often told to begin their introduction by providing context for their argument, acknowledging the larger scope of their topic before narrowing down to a thesis. This is good advice in general, as long as the “larger scope of the topic” is not all of human history. Try to reign in your introduction to a brief summary of the things the reader *needs to know* in order to understand your paper and why it matters. For the paper on smooth vs crunchy peanut butter, this information would likely include some brief history (when did people start making and eating peanut butter?), a few scientific facts (how is peanut butter made?), and some cultural background (where and by whom is it enjoyed?). The reader does not need to hear about how humans need food to survive, or about different people value different tastes. Unless your reader is from another planet, she probably already knows this. Note: if the introduction is too broad, that is often a good indicator that the thesis is also too broad.