Writing an Introduction

Purpose
Introductions are important because they should grab a reader's interest, introduce the subject, and tackle the “So What?” factor. Not only is it the "first impression" of your argument, it also establishes what's to follow.

Whatever your style of writing, you'll probably put your thesis/question at the end of the paragraph. The thesis— a.k.a. your argument— explicitly states the point of your paper. The thesis should be like an umbrella which spans your essay, including all major points found in the essay. But that still leaves the very beginning— that scary blank screen with a flashing, teasing cursor.

The General Statement
You might begin your introduction with a general statement, and with each sentence that follows get more and more specific until you get to the clearly stated thesis. You will want to consider answering the following questions in the intro:

· Who
· What
· When
· Where
· Why
· How

Although it is not always necessary or possible to answer all of these, you should be able to answer some of them, and the questions not only give you a starting point, but provide your reader the needed background to put your essay into context.

Other Options
Or you can begin with one of the following:

· Begin with a quotation. Just make sure you explain its relevance
· Begin with a question
· Begin with an acknowledgment of an opinion opposite to the one you plan to take
· Begin with a very short narrative or anecdote that has a direct bearing on your paper
· Begin with an interesting fact
· Begin with a definition or explanation of a term relevant to your paper
· Begin with irony or paradox
· Begin with an analogy. Make sure it's original but not too far-fetched

Explore
If introductions give you trouble no matter when you do them or how you begin, sometimes it helps to construct several mini-outlines just for that paragraph and try each out to see which works best.