

Great Beginnings

(Openers)

The beginning or opening of your writing is important. A "great beginning" can draw your readers into your work, making them want to read more. But a bad beginning can turn readers away and make them want to put down your work. Below are some ideas for how to give your writing a "great beginning."

Announcement

Open with an announcement about what is to come. However, do not insult the reader by saying something like, "I am going to tell you about..."¹

Background Information

Bold and Challenging Statement

A bold and challenging statement is similar to an announcement, but is meant to cause some people to disagree with what you say. It's like one side of an argument. It can be an opinion, but don't immediately state that it is your opinion.

Example:

Using horses and cattle in the sport of rodeo is animal abuse. What makes it more aggravating is that it is legal.¹

Climactic Lead

The remains of Thanksgiving dinner sat like an abandoned wreck on the dining room table: she had eaten it all and the guests hadn't even arrived yet. This would have to stop."¹

Definition

Open with a definition of the term you are discussing. It can be your own or come from a dictionary or textbook.

Example:

According to Webster's Dictionary, a government is the authority that serves the people and acts on their behalf.¹

Dialogue

"Where's Papa going with that axe?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast."

Enumerated general statement

Begin with a general statement containing three or so ideas about your topic. The information given in the lead is general, not specific. The specific details that support the

general statement will appear later in the paper.

Example:

There are many characteristics that a good teacher possesses. However, the three most important characteristics include being a good listener, being knowledgeable about the subject, and having a kind heart. All of the teachers who positively influenced me had all three of those characteristics in common.¹

Figurative Language

Begin with a simile (comparison using like or as), metaphor (comparison saying one thing is another thing), personification (giving something nonhuman human qualities), or hyperbole (exaggeration.) The figurative language must relate directly to your topic.

Example:

The pencil sharpener was always hungry. It ate my pencil every time I went to sharpen it. It never seemed to do this to anyone's pencil but mine. What was so special about my pencils?¹

Hypothetical situation/scenario

Opinion

Open with your opinion about the topic. This is similar to a bold and challenging statement, but you let the reader know that it is your opinion right away.¹

Example:

In my opinion, the driving age should be lowered to fourteen. Most teenagers are more responsible than adults give us credit for being. Just because we are teenagers does not mean we are irresponsible and dangerous.

Personal Experience/Anecdote

Open with something that has happened to you, or a personal experience. It could be a part of the story, or it could be something that is

not a part of what you are writing about but still relates to the topic.

Example:

Although I did later in my room, I never cried at my grandfather's funeral.¹

Question

Open with an interesting question that relates to the main idea.

Example:

Have you ever wondered how you would survive if you found yourself alone in the wilderness?¹

Quotation

Open with a quotation that is well known or from a famous person. Be sure to put quotations around the quotation and give credit to the person who said it. Of course, the quotation must be directly related to your topic.¹

Example:

The Prophet ﷺ said, "A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands."

Riddle

Open with a riddle that the reader can solve by reading further. You may want to give the answer right away or save it for the conclusion.¹

Example:

What textbook has no pages, is miles wide, and smells like a creek? It's been around for millions of years. That's right--Outdoor School.

Striking fact/statistic

Use a striking fact to engage your audience's interest. Cite a startling statistic from a reliable authority.²

"According to a 1999 Statistics Canada poll, 93% of Canadians would support legislation to ban assault weapons."

¹. www.debfourblocks.com

². UBC Writing Centre, <http://www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/workshop>