

Introductions workshop

This material taken from *The Writer's Response*

There are several ways to build the lead in, or first few sentences of your introduction.

A general statement. Begin with a general statement and then follow it with more particular or specific statements leading to your thesis statement. This introductory strategy is sometimes referred to as a funnel introduction because, like a funnel, it is broad at the opening and narrow at the bottom.

A Question. Many writers open their essays with a question that is meant to attract the interest of the reader. Sometimes writers use a rhetorical question—that is, a question for which no answer is expected because the intended answer is obvious. An example of a rhetorical question: “Should we allow child abuse to continue?” A writer might open an essay with a question that requires an answer—and the need to hear the answer keeps the reader reading.

An Anecdote or Brief Story. Many people enjoy stories. For most, reading about real people in real situations is far more convincing and interesting than reading about general ideas. For that reason, opening an essay with a short description of a person, place, or event can be an effective way of grabbing your reader’s attention.

A Quotation. A quotation from someone connected with your topic, from an article you’re writing about, or from an expert on your subject can be a good way of opening your introduction. You might look up a famous quotation on your subject in a book such as Bartlett’s *Familiar Quotations*. Use these sparingly. Many professors like you to begin and end your essays with your own words.

A Striking Statement or Fact. A fact can be used as a striking lead-in to an essay. Once you have captured the attention of your reader through a strategy like a striking or interesting fact, he or she will tend to keep reading.

An example of each:

1. **Anecdote** or story:

One morning a young mother had her seven-month-old son in his stroller under the peach tree near their family swimming pool. She walked to her kitchen to get a knife so she could peel a peach for him. Ten seconds later, she found him face down with the stroller at the bottom of the pool. She immediately pulled him out and administered artificial respiration to him.

2. Using a **Striking statement or fact**:

Every fourteen seconds, a child in Africa becomes an orphan due to AIDS-related death.

3. Using a **rhetorical question**:

Do we want polar bears to become extinct?

Or a **question the essay will answer**:

How can we, as a nation, earn the world's respect back?

4. **General statement**, or funnel introduction:

The issue of whether we should allow marine parks to stay open has been widely debated in our community recently.

5. **Quotation**:

"The mind is its own place, and itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."