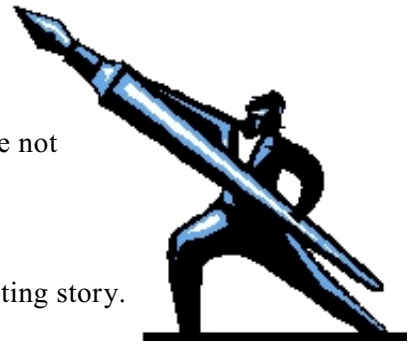


Introductory Techniques



Beginnings are Everything

We begin in ways that are familiar to the reader, but we begin in ways that are not too overly familiar.

1. **Tell an anecdote/ brief story.**

Begin your essay with a short story. Everyone loves an interesting story.

2. **Open with a challenging/thought-provoking question.**

A question demands an answer. If you ask, the person you ask will try to answer. In writing, it is the reader who will try, and by making that attempt the reader has entered into your writing. Now you have to keep the reader interested.

3. **Use a quotation.**

A quotation is usually a good beginning because you have chosen the quoted material just because it is important to your story; therefore, the reader will also probably find it important. The reader may also recognize the quotation and feel comfortable about it, sharing some of your insight. (**Note:** that's why politicians use quotations in their speeches).

4. **Use an unusual statement.**

The reader might not agree with the statement, but at least you have gotten the reader's attention. After that you can qualify your statement, if you must.

5. **Use startling facts/statistics.**

There is something about facts that appeal to most readers. We live in an "Information Age." If the facts are especially startling, then you have a stronger grip on the reader's attention.

6. **State your main point, your thesis.**

Sometimes it is best to just come right out with what it is you are concerned with. Most people admire directness.

7. **Use an analogy.**

An analogy is an extended comparison. Eg. "Writing essays is like eating grapes at the beach on a summer's day, as you watch the sun twinkle on the waves". We learn that writing essays is relaxing, and that, like a day at the beach, it gives us opportunities to reflect on the majesty of the world.

8. **Begin with a dramatic scene.**

Drama means conflict, and conflict gets our interest.

9. **Begin with a descriptive scene.**

Descriptive detail acts like a photograph. It appeals to us. (**Note:** that's why magazines use photographs to attract our attention). Eg. Create an image with concrete and specific language.

10. **Start with dialogue.**

Dialogue is the way we get the human voice into our papers.

11. **Focus down.**

Show broad scope of subject, and then progressively narrow the focus until it is on one thing (eg. The colour of the feathers on the duck as it quacked at the dog).

