The beginning of a story is called a "lead". The lead can be a sentence, a paragraph, or even a page long. A good beginning "leads" a reader into the story. It makes them want to find out more. It catches their attention, enticing them to continue reading. Skilled writers start their stories with good leads. A good lead adds to your "voice". It helps your reader connect with you. You can communicate a sense of excitement, sadness, mystery, fear, or any other emotion with a good lead. Below are some ideas on how to write an interesting lead. Not every type of lead will work for every writer or for every piece of writing. You'll have to experiment with them. Be sure to have a least three sentences in your lead, whatever type it may be.

1. **Begin with one or more questions that grab the reader's attention.**

   *EXAMPLE:* Have you ever wondered what it would be like to travel among the stars, or ride in a space shuttle and be a part of NASA's famous astronaut team? Perhaps you could make your dream come true just like a girl from California did in 1977; this famous astronaut's name is Sally Ride.

2. **Begin with a startling statistic (number evidence) or unusual fact.**

   *EXAMPLE:* Avoid starting out with a boring line like "In this essay I will explain why Rosa Parks was an important figure." Instead, try something like "A Michigan museum recently paid $492,000 for an old, dilapidated bus from Montgomery, Alabama." The second sentence sounds much more interesting, doesn't it? It would encourage most people to keep on reading.

3. **Begin with a quote from an expert in the field or experienced person.**

   *EXAMPLE 1:* "Our future lies with today's kids and tomorrow's space exploration," said Sally Ride, one of the most famous women astronauts of our time. Not only has Ride spent her career traveling the stars, but she has dedicated her life to helping students learn more about space and become our future explorers.

   *EXAMPLE 2:* “People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn’t true. I was not physically tired, but I was only tired of giving in,” said Rosa Parks when asked about her historic act of defiance that changed the face of America forever.

4. **Begin with a short anecdote (story)**

   *EXAMPLE:* Imagine being such a good tennis player that you win a school scholarship to play. Imagine dropping out of college to pursue a career in professional tennis. Imagine being this good at one thing, then tackling another career too. That's exactly what a young girl named Sally Ride did. Although she started on the road to being a tennis pro, Sally soon realized that her true calling was in astrophysics, and she would become one of today's most famous women astronauts!
**Objective:** To help you understand / practice lead-ins and thesis statements.

**Directions:** Review the CNN page explaining strategies for writing an attention grabbing introduction to any essay. Re-read the essay question, choose two lead-in strategies, and create a lead-in which could be used in the introductory paragraph of your essay.

1. **Start with a thought provoking question.** What question could you ask that would go with the question for your essay?

2. **Open the essay with a statistic or fact.** Are you aware of any statistical (numerical) facts that have to do with your question?

3. **Provide an unusual detail.** Do you know an unusual fact or detail that is somehow connected to the essay question?

4. **Quote a person.** Did someone say something that you can quote to help begin your essay?

5. **Write a short and to-the-point anecdote (short story).** Is there a story that you can tell that goes along with the topic?

**Thesis statement are usually a sentence or two which states what you are going to do in your essay and usually comes at the end of the introduction. Write a theses statement that tells the reader what your essay is going to be about.**

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