



SECTION 5: Introductions and Conclusions

Introducing the Introduction Paragraph

Teacher Background

The introduction and conclusion paragraphs of an expository piece are critically important. These two sections require the application of many of the skills previously taught. For this reason, we suggest teaching introductions and conclusions after students have mastered the range of elaboration skills, as these same skills can be applied successfully to crafting strong introductions and conclusions.

The Introduction Paragraph

The introduction paragraph must grab the reader's attention and inspire them to read on. If the introduction is boring or dull, the reader will likely put the piece aside. The function of the introduction paragraph, in addition to grabbing the reader's attention, is to present the topic to the reader - to explain what they will be learning about by reading the piece. The introduction paragraph contains the **lead** and the **topic sentence**. A strong lead will hook the reader and capture their attention, inviting the reader in. Numerous techniques can be used to create an effective, attention grabbing lead. The activities in this section familiarize students with a variety of different types of leads and then provide opportunities for students to generate leads of their own.

Additionally, students will learn to identify and then write clear, concise topic sentences (sometimes known as thesis statements). The topic sentence tells the reader what the entire piece is about. The topic sentence will either clearly state what the reader will be learning about or strongly imply it. For example, *Dogs are the best possible pets – there are many different breeds of dogs, they are good companions, and can learn lots of tricks.* This topic sentence clearly outlines the three main ideas that will be presented in the piece. In contrast, the following topic sentence simply states: *Dogs are the best possible pets.* While the reader is expecting to read information that supports this, the main ideas are not clearly stated. We suggest that beginning expository writers, when creating topic sentences, make an effort to reference each main idea. This allows them to stay focused and to keep the organization clear.



WHAT YOUR INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH NEEDS

A LEAD: Catch the reader's attention with:

- an amazing or unusual fact
- a question
- a descriptive segment
- a statistic
- a quote
- an anecdote

A TOPIC SENTENCE: Briefly, *clearly*, tell the reader what the piece will be about.

Read each introduction paragraph that follows. Pay attention to the different kinds of leads. The lead appears in italics. The topic sentence is underlined. Notice that the topic sentence in each example is the same!

They're cute and furry, sophisticated and intelligent, playful and independent. Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: descriptive segment)

These celebrities of the animal kingdom have been featured everywhere from Broadway to King Tut's tomb! Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: amazing fact)

"I'd travel anywhere around the globe to make a picture," says Hollywood actress Maxine Foster, "as long as I could bring my kitty cat along on the shoot!" Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: quote)

What do more than 70 million Americans have in common? They are the proud owners of the fabulous feline! Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: statistic)

Are you looking for a good companion, a faithful friend, some good clean entertainment? Then look no further! Just buy yourself a cat! Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: question)

I come home and plop down on my couch, exhausted. A warm ball of fur rubs against my ankles, jumps onto the couch and cuddles up, purring softly. Suddenly I feel the stress of the day melting away. Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: anecdote)

Notice that there is no doubt what any of these paragraphs are introducing...an expository piece of writing that will provide information about the following topic: CATS MAKE WONDERFUL PETS. Also notice that the author can be as creative as he or she wants to be in constructing an attention grabbing lead--each lead sentence was effective.

Name _____

Writing an Attention-Grabbing Lead - 1



Read the topic sentence below:

Dogs help people in many ways.

The topic sentence tells us that the piece will be about all of the ways dogs help people. Think about the various kinds of leads you can write to grab the reader's attention:

- **Descriptive Segment** • **Amazing Fact** • **Question**
- **Quote** • **Statistic** • **Anecdote**

Use the spaces below to write an example of each kind of **lead**. Make sure your lead catches the reader's attention and draws the reader on to the topic sentence which is given.

- **Descriptive Segment** (Write several phrases that describe helpful dogs.)

Dogs help people in many ways.

- **Amazing Fact** (Write an amazing or little known fact about the ways a dog could be helpful. If you aren't sure of one, ask people you know who have experience with dogs.)

Dogs help people in many ways.

