**Effective Lead-Ins: How to get Your Audience’s Attention**

The lead in of your paper’s introduction catches the reader’s attention, introduces the subject matter and tone of your essay, and sets up or leads into the presentation of your thesis and essays. Here are eleven examples with explanations that show you how you can introduce your topic to your audience.

1. **A paradoxical statement**

**What it means:** A paradox is a statement that appears at first to be contradictory, but upon reflection makes sense. This literary device is commonly used to engage readers to discover an underlying logic that allows them to understand concepts in a different and non-traditional way.

**Example:** “All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.”

In his novel *Animal Farm*, author George Orwell writes about how the government insists that everyone is equal yet fails to treat everyone equally. At first glance, the line above doesn’t make any sense. However, when examining the statement, it speaks a different kind of truth that continues to haunt modern-day society: the political truth. Since the concept of equality given is opposite to our common belief, it becomes a paradox.

1. **Intriguing statement**

**What is means:** absorbing, arresting, consuming, engaging, fascinating, interesting

**Example:** “The Vikings never called themselves Vikings, and they did not think of themselves as a united group. They were a series of chieftain-led tribes that fought against each other throughout Denmark, Sweden, and Norway according to factside.com.”

1. **An anecdote, relevant or personal story, or a joke**

**What it means**: A story has a structure that makes it memorable. An anecdote briefly describes something that happened.

**Example:** “I met a beautiful woman at a party the other day. I should not have been there because it was at the house of someone who does not like me. However, the woman was nice, and we started to date.”

The above example is an anecdote, which is a short account of an incident or event that is interesting or amusing.

***Let’s turn the above anecdote into a story.***

**Example: *“***I met a beautiful woman at a party the other day. We fell in love at first sight, but when I learned her name, she turned out to be from the family of my sworn enemies. Nonetheless, we married in secret, but I am banished now from the city, while my wife is being pressured to marry someone else.”

This is the first part of *Romeo and Juliet*. Customize your anecdote or story to fit the objectives of your essay or speech.

**Example of a joke: “**Why did Shakespeare only write in pen? He couldn’t decide which type of pencil to use—a 2B or not 2B.”

If you decide to use a joke as an effective lead in, ensure that it is not offensive to others. When in doubt, it is better not to write a joke in your paper.

1. **An arresting statistic or shocking statement**

**Example:** “Across the country, students are preparing to head back to school either in person, online, or some combination of the two for the 2020–21 academic year. However, college enrollment in fall 2020 is expected to be about 6 percent lower than the peak of 21.0 million in fall 2010 according to the National Center for Education Statistics.”

1. **A question**

**Example:** “More colleges are offering online degrees so that working adults can get a college education. However, data shows that less people are entering college today than they did in in fall of 2010. What are the reasons for this decline?”

1. **A quotation or literary allusion**

**What it means:** A literary allusion is a brief reference to a person, place, thing, or idea of historical, cultural, literary, or political importance with which the reader is presumably familiar. Allusions allow a writer to compress a great deal of meaning and significance into a word or phrase.

**Example of a literary allusion:** The Disney classic *The Little Mermaid* features a mermaid with a beautiful voice who lures Prince Eric with the sound of her song. It is a clear reference to the beautiful, but dangerous sirens of mythological lore.

1. **A description, often used for an emotional appeal**

**Example:** “The secret to beautiful skin is moisture, and no ordinary bar hydrates like Dove. That’s because Dove isn’t soap, it’s a Beauty Bar.  While ordinary soaps can strip skin of essential nutrients, Dove Beauty Bar has mild cleansers to care for skin and effectively wash away dirt and germs. Made with our ¼ moisturizing cream, Dove Beauty Bar leaves your skin feeling soft, smooth, and radiant. You can see why we call it a Beauty Bar.”

Advertising companies often use an emotional appeal to entice customers to buy their products. It is perhaps no surprise that Dove soap bar is one of the most popular brands purchased in the United States because the add describes a visual outcome that is desired by most people.

**8. Summary of Who, What, When, Where, Why**

**Tip:** This can be a great lead in for informative essays, like a news article or science report.

**Example:** ‘On June 16, 1996 the Chicago Bulls played a game on their home court that would make them go down in history. As a result of their victory, they not only became the NBA champions, but set a world record by winning their 72nd game of the season.”

In this example, the author has provided the facts about an important game in the Chicago Bulls’ history.

**9. An Analogy or Contrast**

**What it means:** An analogy is a comparison to show similarity between two things. A contrast would instead show the difference.

**Example:** “It has been said that the pen is mightier than the sword. Perhaps even mightier in our modern times is the cell phone, a computer connected to the rest of the world that fits in the palm of a hand and can be a powerful tool for change.”

In this example, the author is showing contrast between the cell phone and earlier inventions (the pen and sword). It contrasts because it is “even mightier.” This helps the writer point out something important about cell phones which s/he can discuss further in the paper.

**10. A Catalog of Relevant Experiences**

**What it means:** This would be a list of related events. The point is to give examples so you can transition into what they have in common.

**Example: “**In 1998, DJ Caspar taught people the Cha Cha Slide. In 2007, it was the Cupid Shuffle by Cupid and more recently, Zay Hilfigerrr and Zayion McCall with Juju on that Beat. Instructional songs like these can get anyone on the dance floor, and they have an even longer history than this.”

In this example, the author lists different songs that teach listeners how to do a dance. A reader has likely heard of at least one of these, so it’s interesting. By pointing out what the songs have in common, the author can then switch to the topic of the history of such music, which will be the focus of the paper.

**11. Statement of a Problem or Popular Misconception**

**Tip:** This can be a particularly effective lead in when you are trying to persuade your audience.

**Example:** “Values, technology, and experiences seem to divide the generations. Yet, people of different age groups have more in common than social media would have them believe.”