

# Some Good Beginnings

## **1. Interesting description. Ashes filled the air when I was around the camp fire. Crackle, crackle it went.**

In this beginning to a story about a camping trip, the writer begins with an interesting description of a camp fire. The writer is using sight and sound details that we might not normally think of and this is what makes this beginning effective for me.

## **2. Sound. Boom! The trunk slammed. Bang! The car doors slammed as we got out of the van.**

Starting with a sound is a simple but effective way to get your reader's attention. In this beginning, the writer uses two sounds and a simple repetition to make the beginning even more interesting.

## **3. The past in the present. It is April 10, 1912. The Titanic is going to travel all the way from England to America.**

In this history piece, the writer is writing about the past but using the present tense. This pulls the reader into the story by giving it the feeling that the action is happening right now.

## **4. Exclamation. Yeah! We're going to Disneyland tomorrow! Yeah!" I yelled about as loud as I could.**

Readers can't help but get a bit excited when the first thing they read is an exclamation. Usually, the exclamation is a single word followed by an exclamation mark: "Cool!" or "Awesome!" or "Ouch!" Etc. Then, the next sentence or two tells the reader what is being exclaimed about.

## **5. A thought. I'm in big trouble now, I thought to myself.**

If you start your piece with someone thinking about something, your readers will almost always want to know why someone is thinking about it. In this lead, don't you want to know what kind of trouble the person is in?

## **6. A complaint. It seems like we never go swimming at Fife pool!**

In this beginning, a second grader is complaining to her parents that her family never gets to go to the pool where she likes to swim. She's expressing strong feelings here and that almost always draws the reader into the story. Of course, if the whole piece was cranky like this, it would get old pretty fast. But for a one-sentence lead, it works well.

## **7. A surprise. Wow! I was doing my back hand-spring and I landed it!**

Chances are that if the first line of your piece begins with some kind of surprise, your reader will feel surprised, too. This beginning also starts with an exclamation and that helps convey the writer's feeling in a strong way the reader will be able to relate to.

## **9. Sound, repetition, and simile. Screech, screech, screech! The first time we tried to play the recorders it sounded like a lion running his claws down a chalkboard.**

This short lead actually combines three different strategies into one. It starts out with the sound of third graders making awful sounds in music class on their recorders. The sound is repeated three times for emphasis. Then, the writer uses a simile so we can understand just how annoying the sound really was. Any one of these three strategies can be used on their own to make a great

beginning. Starting with a simile can be particularly effective.

## **10. Exclamation, repetition, strong feelings. Chores! Chores! Chores! Chores are boring! Scrubbing toilets, cleaning sinks, and washing bathtubs take up a lot of my time and are not fun at all.**

This is the same third grade writer from #9. You can see that she's following a similar pattern for her beginning here. But instead of using a simile at the end, she uses a statement of strong feelings. Expressing strong feelings about something at the beginning of a piece usually does a good job of getting a reader's attention and drawing them in.

## **13. Scary, exciting, or intense moment. ...I tried to run, but I couldn't. The monster seemed like it was growing by the minute! And then, the most horrible thing was about to happen — I screamed and sat bolt upright in bed. I gasped swallowing huge amounts of air.**

This writer is starting her piece with the end of a nightmare. Her use of the ellipsis at the beginning tells us that we're right in the middle of something. Then the dash at the end of the dream signals the interruption of her waking up. It's a good description of the intensity everyone feels when they awake suddenly from a bad dream.

## **14. Main idea. I will always love my grandparents' beach house. The way the waves role over the gooey sand and the way the sand weaves in between your toes. The way we pick up barnacle-covered rocks and watch the sand crabs scurry away. The way we dig for clams and end up knee deep in the never ending sand.**

I love this lead. This is the beginning of a descriptive essay about a family vacation spot. The writer just starts right off with the one most important thing she wants you to know: "I will always love my grandparents' beach house." But then she gives you some nice description to go with it, a few sentences that show you what she loves about it.

## **15. Something interesting to come. It all started on an average day. I didn't think anything unusual was going to happen, but boy was I wrong!**

One of the best ways to hook your readers is to give them just a hint of something interesting without telling them what it is. This lead does a nice job of that. We can't help but wonder what unusual thing happened that day.