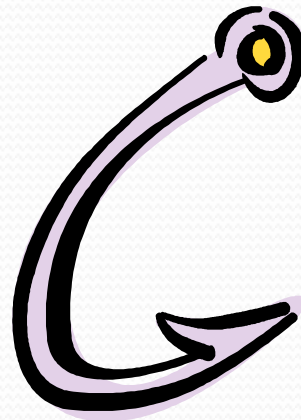


How to Write an Effective Lead

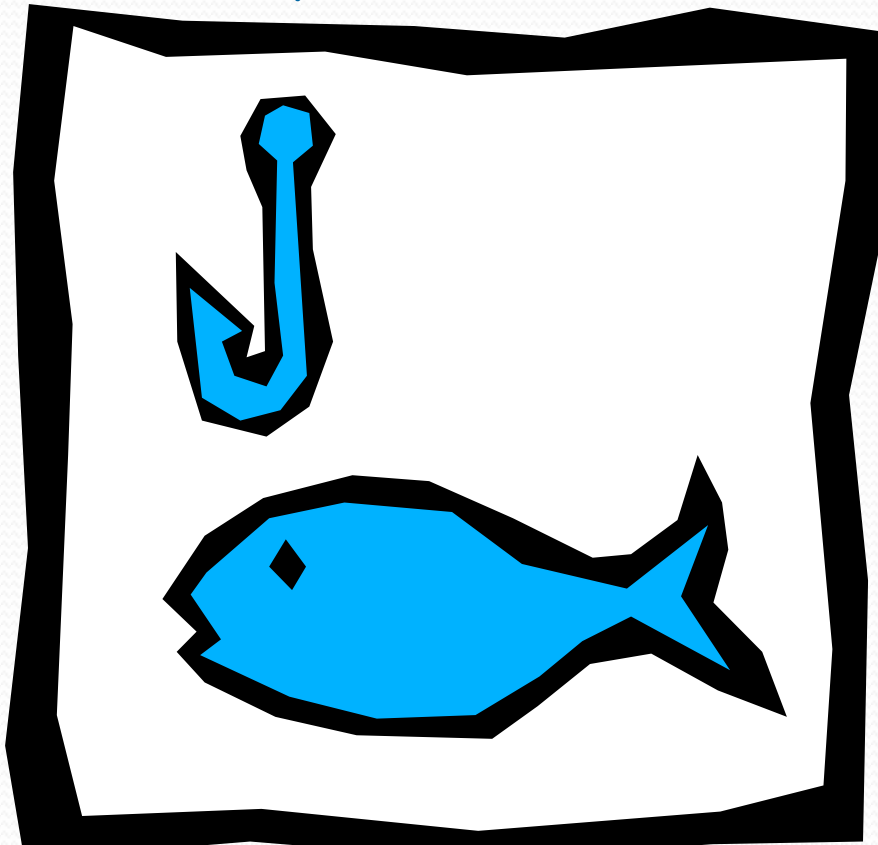
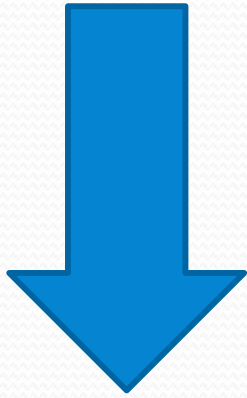
How to hook your reader and spicen up
your writing

Leads

- Every paragraph should start with a “lead.”
- A “lead” is otherwise known as a “catchy opening,” or a “hook.”



Your lead



- The purpose of the lead is to “hook” the reader.
- You can’t catch a fish by waiting for it to jump into your boat.
- You need to dangle that hook, lure it to you and “hook” it.
- Like a fish, the reader might struggle against you, so you need to continue to keep them entertained as they read (but we’ll get to that later).
- Remember, the first step is to hook that fish!



The Reader

How do I hook the reader?

- Leads—like hooks—come in all different shapes and sizes.
- Readers—like fish—come in all different shapes and sizes, too.
- If a deep-sea fisherman went fishing for sharks, he wouldn't bring a hook to catch catfish.
- In order to catch your reader, you have to learn the different kinds of leads to use, and learn which leads will work best for you.


Types of Leads

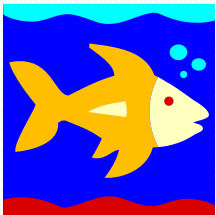
- Questions
- Comparisons
- Fact
- One word Phrase
- Statistic
- Figurative Language
- Descriptive Segments
- A Shocker!
- A Definition

How to write the “Question” Lead


- This might be the “lead” you are most familiar with.
- Let’s pretend you were asked to write a paragraph based on the following prompt:

“In a well developed paragraph, please describe your favorite season and explain why it is your favorite.”

- In order to get maximum credit for this prompt, you need to do 2 things: **describe** the season, and **explain** it.
- Even before you can begin doing either, you have to “hook” the reader. 
- If you don't “hook” them, they won't *care* what your favorite season is.
- In other words, if you don't hook them, that fish will swim away.



The “Question” Lead

- After you brainstorm, create a web/graphic organizer, and feel like you’re ready to start writing, you will start with the lead.
- If you decided to use the  “Question” lead, you need to think about what the prompt is asking of you.
- Because this prompt is asking you to write about your favorite season, the “Question” lead needs to reflect the prompt itself

What to do

An appropriate “Question” lead for your paragraph might look something like this:

- “What is my favorite season?”
- “Why is summer my favorite season?”
- “What makes summer so special?”
- “Why is summer so magical?”
- “What qualities does summer have that make it so special to me?”
- “What sets summer apart from the other seasons?”

What NOT to do

- Make sure when you're writing your "Question" lead, to never write a question that will elicit a "yes" or "no" response from the reader.

For example:

- "Do you have a favorite season?"
- "Do you like summer?"
- "Is summer your favorite season?"

The “Descriptive” Lead

- The “descriptive segment” lead allows you to flex your creative writing muscles and “hook” the reader through vivid description.

This type of lead is very effective because:

- You can prove to the reader you can mix technical and creative writing effectively.
- By writing descriptively, you can create sights, sounds, smells, and feelings in the reader’s mind.

Descriptive Leads

Let's look at that prompt again.

“In a well developed paragraph, please describe your favorite season and explain why it is your favorite.”

Descriptive Leads

- “When I think of summer, the colors of blue, gold and green splash across my mind.”
- “The sound of the air conditioner thrumming, the cool touch of minty ice cream on my tongue, and the smell of freshly cut grass make me think of summertime.”
- “A warm blue sky, cotton ball clouds and a crayola-colored sun spilling gold over the world means only one thing: summer time has come again!”
- “I’ll close my eyes and listen to the surf wash over the shore, dig my toes deep into the warm late-morning sand and breathe deep the salty air that blows across the water top.”

Types of Leads

Analogy or comparison – compares or contrasts two different things

Anecdote or case history – provides a real-life scenario or nonfiction story

Direct address – addresses reader using second person “you”

Fact – contains an interesting bit of information about the topic

Metaphor – a figure of speech to show how two unlike things are similar in one important way; states something is something else

Description – explains the setting, characters, or factual events

One word/phrase – starts with a specific image or sound such as “Zing!”

Controversial statement – takes a stand on the topic

Statistic – reveals a detail about the topic, based on quantitative data

Summary – crystallizes what will be addressed

From *A Writer's Guide to Nonfiction* by Elizabeth Lyon (2003), adapted for middle school.