**HOW TO START AN ARTICLE**

When someone starts reading your article, you have just a few seconds to draw them in and convince them to keep going.

Remember, your articles are competing with TV, Internet surfing, chores, administrative tasks and meetings — not to mention hundreds of other pitches and articles. To help you draw the busy, distracted reader into your writing, here are some tips.

1. Start with a quote.

Imagine starting an article on infidelity like this:

*“I knew I never should have trusted my best friend,” says Sarah Johnson of Lawrence, Kansas.*

A quote that surprises readers, entices them, or leaves just a little to the imagination is a great way to keep their eyeballs on the page. Just be sure not to overuse this tactic: It’s so easy to use that many writers are tempted to rely on it for all their articles, and editors do notice if you’re a one-note.

How to get this magical quote? The more you practice interviewing, the better you’ll get at eliciting great quotes from your sources. Write up a list of questions, but don’t stick to the list — use it as a guideline, but ask other questions as you think of them during the conversation. You’re more likely to get a source talking freely if you approach the interview as a conversation than if you fire questions at her from a list shotgun-style.

2. Jump into the action.

Too many writers start off their queries and articles by hemming and hawing, giving too much background, and generally boring the reader. One trick professional writers use is to simply lop off the first paragraph or two of their piece so that it starts right in the middle of the action.

For example, say you’re writing about your experience having a heart attack. Instead of explaining what happened to you starting at the beginning or describing your health status previous to the heart attack, start with yourself being wheeled into the emergency room with medical workers swarming around you. For example:

*“Code Blue! Code Blue!” Those were the last words I heard in my delirium before I went under — and when I woke up, I found myself in a hospital bed, tethered to machines with tubes sprouting from my arms. I’d had a heart attack while I was getting ready to leave for work that morning.*

3. Use a startling statistic.

If you were shocked by a statistic, chances are your readers will be, too. So if parents of only children and five times happier than parents of multiple kids, or bullying victims are 8 times more likely to commit suicide (I just made those up), be sure to put that somewhere in your opening paragraphs.

4. Find a compelling anecdote.

This is one of the best ways to start an article, and is related to my tip to jump into the action. Many women’s and health magazines start a good portion of their articles with a personal anecdote as a matter of course.

An anecdote can come from someone in the magazine’s target demographic, or from yourself if you’re part of the magazine’s demographic. They’re easy to find, too…think of what kind of anecdote would best illustrate your topic, and ask around on relevant forums and source-finding services like [Help a Reporter](http://www.helpareporter.com/) for people who have been through that experience.

Here’s the lede I used on an article about perfectionism for *Oxygen* magazine:

*Elisabeth Andrews, a fitness instructor in Bloomington, Indiana, used to get anxious before every class and worry that she would forget her routine. “Then one day, when the class was especially packed, we were doing a stretch with our arms in the air and I loudly told everyone over the microphone to ‘Keep your head between your ears,'” Andrews recalls. “Everyone laughed so hard, including me, and it turned out that a lot of people felt more comfortable asking questions after I had shown my imperfection. As a result I was able to be a better leader and connect with my class.”*

A personal anecdote like this helps the reader relate to the situation you’re writing about and makes him want to keep reading.

5. Use specific language.

Readers are drawn in by precise language and strong phrasing that gets your point across — not vague generalities. For example, when I pitched an article about health-hazard clothing, I didn’t write:

*If your shoes are too small, they can hurt your feet.*

Instead, I wrote:

*If you’re teetering around in too-tight Manolos, you can get hit with foot woes ranging from simple soreness to bunions.*

See how many specifics I used? A brand name instead of the general “shoes.” “Teetering” instead of just “wearing” or “walking.” “Soreness” and “bunions” instead of merely “hurt.”

Here’s another example: This is the lede to a query that led to an article in the now-defunct $1/word market *Zillions*:

*It can happen to even the savviest shopper: The Levis you bought disintegrate after just one washing, or maybe that Game Boy cartridge isn’t nearly as exciting as it looked in the ad. Don’t toss your new purchase and hope for better luck next time — write to the company and tell them what you think!*

I could just as easily have written:

*It can happen to even the savviest shopper: The jeans or toys you bought aren’t good quality. Don’t toss your new purchase and hope for better luck next time — write to the company and tell them what you think!*

Do you agree that the second version is weaker and more likely to cause the reader to give up and move on to more interesting things? In the first version, by using brand names and giving concrete examples of what happens to those products (“disintegrate after just one washing” and “isn’t nearly as exciting as it looked in the ad”), I help the reader form a clear vision of the situation in her mind — and keep her reading.

# Here is another article on the same theme.

# How to Write Perfect Introduction for Your Articles

**The introduction of an article can determine whether it gets read or not. That is why smart writers are very particular about how they write their introductions — and writing effective introductions isn’t as complicated as many people think.**

According to Copyblogger, [on average](https://www.copyblogger.com/writing-headlines-that-get-results/) eight out 0f 10 people will read the headline of a piece of content but only 2 out of 10 will go on to read the rest.

While a lot of factors will determine how many more people will go on to read your article, more often than not it is your introduction that will make the most difference.

Whether you want to write an introduction for an essay, an introduction for a research paper, an introduction for a report, or an introduction for a short article, you can often do so by following a set of principles.

Firstly, however, why is an introduction important?

Instead of simply telling you why an introduction is important, I’ll show you several example introductions and the impression the left on me.

## Examples that Show Why It is Important to Write a Good Introduction

I came across the following introduction many years ago and it made me realize the importance of writing really good introductions.

You can read it below:



(The text of the above image is reproduced below for those who cannot view images)

“Dear Reader:

On a beautiful late spring afternoon, twenty-five years ago, two young men graduated from the same college. They were very much alike, these two young men. Both had been better than average students, both were personable and both — as young college graduates are — were filled with ambitious dreams for the future.

Recently, these men returned to their college for their 25th reunion.

They were still very much alike. Both were happily married. Both had three children. And both, it turned out, had gone to work for the same Midwestern manufacturing company after graduation, and were still there.

But there was a difference. One of the men was manager of a small department of that company. The other was its president.”

Talk about a good example of a perfect introduction!

You’ve probably come across the above example introduction before. This is because it is the introduction used in what is widely regarded as the greatest sales letter of all time. The sales letter that used this introduction sold [over $2 billion worth of Wall St. Journal subscriptions](https://swiped.co/file/wallstreet-letter-conroy/) and ran for 28 years!

You might want to read that again: that’s 2 BILLION (with a “B”) as a result of a single sales letter, mostly thanks to a sold introduction.

**The above example introduction works because it ticks many check marks**:

* **It uses a story (if used rightly, especially for less formal writing, stories can be a very good way to start your introduction!)**
* **It started on an optimistic note and suddenly shows things didn’t end happily after. Readers will naturally ask, “Why?” As a result, they want to read further.**
* **It was written in a way that defies logic and creates friction in readers’ minds that needs to be resolved. For example, it tells us both men had similar backgrounds, similar personalities, similar education, and similar dreams. Both even worked at the same company. Yet, one was at its peak while the other was far below him. Readers will naturally ask, “Why did these two men experience different outcomes?” And this makes them want to read further.**

When writing introductions, it is important to realize that it isn’t usually about word count. Both long and short introductions can work if they are written the right way.

Take a look at the following example introductory paragraph used by American Express in its “Quite Frankly” advertisement, also widely regarded as one of the greatest sales letters of all time, to see what I mean:



(the text in the above image is reproduced below for those who cannot view images)

“Quite frankly, the American Express Card is not for everyone. And not everyone who applies for Cardmembership is approved.”

In less than 20 words, this introduction hooks readers and make them want to read the entire copy by exploiting their innate curiosity:

Why isn’t the American Express Card for everyone? Why is it that not everyone who applies is approved? More importantly, would the reader have been approved if he/she were to apply?

These are questions readers will have as they read the introduction, and their natural curiosity to get an answer to these questions will push them to read further.

The American Express ad introduction was so effective that it was reportedly responsible for [billions of dollars of business](http://towersofzeyron.com/the-sales-letter-that-made-a-billion-dollars-for-american-express-shows-you-how-to-win-customers-for-your-high-end-brand/) for them during the 12 years period it ran.

Yet another example introduction in more recent times:



(the text in the above image is reproduced below for those who cannot view images)

“There was no mention of more sex or bungee jumps. A palliative nurse who has counselled the dying in their last days has revealed the most common regrets we have at the end of our lives. And among the top, from men in particular, is ‘I wish I hadn’t worked so hard’.”

The above example introductory paragraph is from The Guardian’s “[Top five regrets of the dying](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/feb/01/top-five-regrets-of-the-dying)” article.

The above introduction works because it leverages two key factors: surprise and authority.

Many would expect people to have much deeper, profound regrets while dying, but in a culture that celebrates working hard above all else, this introduction has an element of surprise to it — and this hooks people on: “Why would most people wish they hadn’t worked harder on their *deathbed*?”

The introduction also leverages authority. “Authority” can come in the form of statistics, facts, or some other data. In this instance, it cited a nurse who spends time with people at the point of death. Certainly, the nurse is an authority figure who knows enough to be able to make the claims in the introduction.

Many years after it was published, The Guardian cited the article that used the above example introduction as its second most popular article in about four years (secondly only to its article about Edward’s Snowden’s NSA revelations) — even [as it celebrated 100 monthly million unique visits](https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/apr/17/the-guardians-top-100-which-articles-have-been-most-popular).

This is no mean feat when you consider the fact that we’re talking about possibly billions of visits and that The Guardian was the media outlet that broke the news about Edward Snowden’s revelations of the NSA’s spying on Americans — a very sensational news item at the time.

## Why You Should Spend More Time Writing Introductions

As a writer, you should realize that your readers are always very busy, and there are a lot of things fighting for their attention. A sure-fire way to get a lot more people to read your content to the end, and tell others about it, is to work on writing the perfect introduction.

Your introduction leads to your content, and if people don’t enjoy your introduction they would probably not read your content — no matter how great it is.

I have written a lot of articles over the years, and writing introductions is probably the most difficult part of writing my articles. Once I’m able to write the introduction for an article, writing every other part of the article becomes easy.

I have found the following six methods to be very effective for writing effective introductions — I also include examples to make it easy for you to understand:

## How to Write Introductions: 6 Methods that Work

You can write effective introductions by using any of the following six methods. These methods work regardless of whether you’re writing introductions for an article, a report, an essay, or a research paper. I also include an example to help you see each of the ways to write an introduction in action.

**Method #1: Start With A Question**

My preferred way to write introductions is to start with a question.

It is human nature to want to think about an answer to a question we are asked, and since it is presupposed that your article already has the answer to the question you asked in the introduction, your readers won’t be able to stop reading your article until they find the answer.

By using questions to start your introductions you are tapping into readers’ innate curiosity. As a result, your readers won’t be able to stop just at the introduction. They will read your article to the end to find the answer to the question you asked.

**Example**: Do you know that using introductions in your articles can increase the chances of your reader reading your article to the end by 400 percent?

With the above example used as an introduction, the reader naturally wants to find out why, and how, using an introduction can increase the chances of an article being read to the end by 400 percent.

**Method #2: Start With Facts**

People love facts. This is because facts usually have an element of surprise and make the reader appear smarter. People are also not used to reading many articles with facts, so your introduction stands out when it uses facts.

If you want to get people to read your content much longer, it might be a good idea to use facts for your introduction.

**Example**: 31.3 percent of American adults are obese, and the percentage of obese Americans increased by 5 percent in 2018 alone.

By reading the above example as the introduction to an article you will want to know why 33.8 percent of American adults are obese and why that number increased so much in one year.

**Method #3: Start With a Story**

Why are inherently wired to love stories.

In fact, [research has shown](https://medium.com/swlh/the-science-of-storytelling-why-we-love-stories-fceb3464d4c3) that our brain releases a hormone called oxytocin when we hear good stories. Oxytocin is a hormone that makes us feel good. It is the same hormone that is released when we reach a sexual high.

In other words, use a really good story as your introduction and the reader has a feeling similar to that of having really enjoyable sex. Who wouldn’t want to read your article to the end in such a scenario?!

People also love stories because they can relate better to them. You can use *good*personal or made up stories as introductions in your article so as to get a lot of people to read along.

**Example**: I lost my father at the tender age of seven. Because my father was wealthy, it wasn’t until his death that I started seeing the other side of life. All of my father’s friends and family members who constantly visited and socialized with us when he was alive departed my family when he was gone. Some relatives even went as far as to take his properties after his death.

**Method #4: Start With an Interesting Quote**

A lot of great and wise men have lived before us, and so many of them have gone through a lot of pain and joy and as a result have a lot of knowledge to share. Fortunately, some of the best sayings of these great men have been made available as quotes and people are always inspired by them.

In other words, [quotes](http://www.brainyquote.com/) are able to connect with people, and using a quote to start your article puts your reader in the right frame of mind to read your article.

**Example**: “I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times“ – Bruce Lee

A quote is simply irresistible, because it echoes the saying of a great man, and as a result, you want to read the article to find out what the writer is trying to add to, or criticize in, “such a great saying” that has been for a very long time.

**Method #5: Start With Humor**

After a busy day at work, or after being bombarded with all the sad news from the media, what better way to assimilate some quality information than it being introduced with humor?

While they might not always ask for it, everybody appreciates some great humor, especially if it is being used as an introduction to a great article they need to read.

**Example**: “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

**Method #6: Start With Interesting Statements**

You can also start the introduction of your article with an interesting statement. While this statement doesn’t necessarily need to be a fact, or quote, it makes people want to read your article to know the reason behind you using the statement.

**Example**: Some people will never be what they think they are. Lord help me be the person my dog thinks I am.

Seeing the above statement as the introduction to any article makes you want to read the article. Why? You want to know the reason why someone wants to be the person his dog thinks he is…lol! Seriously, statements like that are sometimes very unique, and provoke a lot of thought, and as a result, you want to know what the reasons for the author using the statement are.

In conclusion: Introductions can break or make your article. Learning to use the right introductions for your article can determine whether a reader reads it or not.

An article becomes easy to write once the introduction has been written.