

Five Ways to Begin a Story or Essay

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Sometimes getting started is the hardest part of writing. These five easy introductions work great for either fiction or nonfiction and are acceptable beginnings on state writing assessments.

The most effective way to teach these five introductions is to actually have students write five essays. Try to do one essay every two weeks, and be sure to model your own writing as the students write. Do not underestimate the value of modeling and demonstration. Your students are learning how to do this; you cannot simply assign the task and walk away. It is also helpful if you pause often and allow students to share what they have written so far. All introductions should have a minimum of three sentences.

- 1. Use a quote.** This is a good time to reinforce students' knowledge of how to use quotation marks. Have the students begin their story with a famous saying, such as "Happy Birthday to you," or simply some words that someone has said, "Please take these papers to the office," said Mrs. Smith.
- 2. Use a sound or motion word.** Kids love using these for introductions. Have them think of something that will represent the story, and begin with that. Here are two examples: "Buzz! Buzz! That is the sound I heard last Saturday when I got a crazy haircut." "Wiggle, wiggle! That is what I kept doing to my front tooth."
- 3. Ask a question.** This is also a kid favorite because it is easy. Allow students to use this in the beginning of the year, but encourage them to try other introductions as they become more confident writers.
- 4. Start talking.** This is sort of the "Once upon a time . . ." type of writing. The student simply begins the piece. Favorite beginnings are "One day . . .," "Last summer . . .," "There is a volcano called . . ."
- 5. Restate the prompt.** Obviously this is used on state writing assessments, but students need to know they can use this if they absolutely, positively cannot think of any other way to begin. Samples: "Everyone has a favorite day of the week. This essay will explain why I love Saturdays." "Rainbows are some of nature's most beautiful creations. This essay will describe the best rainbow I have ever seen."