

Writing an Opening Paragraph

If you are writing a personal narrative, an essay, a report, or a research paper, you need to plan an opening or a lead paragraph. Your opening should introduce your subject, gain your reader's attention, and identify the specific focus, or thesis, of your writing. There are many different ways to begin an opening paragraph. You might . . .

- share some interesting or important details,
- ask the readers a question,
- begin with an informative quotation,
- start with some thoughtful dialogue, or
- simply identify the main points you wish to cover.



By all means try to make your opening interesting and entertaining; but, more importantly, make sure it reflects your true feelings. If you don't like how your first attempt sounds, try again.

SAMPLE Opening Paragraph

The following opening paragraph comes from student writer Seema Setia's essay about her grandfather in Delhi, India. Note how effectively Seema uses interesting details to lead readers into the essay. Also note the sincere, honest voice she establishes. (The focus statement is underlined.)

Interesting details

He has shown me the love and beauty of nature ever since I was born. He gives me his huge bedroom while he sleeps in the smallest room in the house. He doesn't take me to movies, or to big, fancy restaurants. Instead, he tells me stories and shows me new flowers that he has planted. He is always available to answer my questions with his immense knowledge. He is my grandfather, someone who has always done the small things to please me.

—from *Lessons Learned with Love*