

## Writing a LEAD to Open Your Writing

By: Frank Holes, Jr. The lead may even be an excerpt or scene from a story, book, movie, or TV show. These are good because your reader may have read or watched the scene already. This creates a connection, a bond, between the reader and the writing by sharing common ground. The key to a lead is to provide a short story your audience can relate to the subject of your writing, or to the mood or tone you wish to establish. You may want the reader somber, compassionate, joyous, or expectant. The lead does act as an attention getter, drawing your readers into the writing. It also connects the reader's personal experience to the writing. The quicker and more deeply you can connect to the reader, the greater the chance your writing will be read and your message will be remembered. However, the lead is different from your topic sentence. A topic sentence introduces the subject of the writing, and sets up the structure of the paragraph. The lead, on the other hand, is independent of the content of the paragraph. It could be removed from the writing without affecting the overall message (it could be totally deleted and the paragraph would still maintain its integrity). It is used to set the mood or tone in the reader, or to elicit a response toward the overall subject. The leads may be as short as a sentence fragment, or as long as several sentences (maybe even a paragraph) in length. Sometimes we require specific lead lengths, and other times we leave it open to the students to decide. The lead must be extremely vivid, using specific actions and descriptive words to effectively paint a picture in the reader's mind. You cannot use enough adjectives. The lead should also leave the reader wanting more. We sometimes use fragments to leave the reader hanging. This is accomplished by an ellipsis ( ... ) after the last word of the fragment. The lead is an advanced technique in writing, and its proper use shows a maturity in the author's style. We strongly encourage you and your students to practice story telling and narrative forms of writing. Have students start small, using single sentences and fragments, and then working up to more complex leads. This, we've found, also impresses the scorers on those high stakes state/national tests. You'll find your students writing becoming more rich and complex as they master this technique. Here are a couple of leads:

The gigantic, drooling hound snarled and barked as it backed me up against the rough bark of the oak tree. (descriptive essay on fear) The dark, angry clouds pushed their way across the gray sky as the crisp wind bit into my skin. (survival story) As I ran, gasping for breath, through the midnight blackness of the eerie forest, I could hear the snapping and cracking of branches as my pursuer closed the distance ... (scary narrative) Did you find this article helpful and useful for your classes? Interested in more information on teaching writing, or writing ideas you can use (and adapt or change for your classes)?

See our website or click the following link to access our NEW writing page: <http://www.starteaching.com/writing.htm>.

## About the Author

-----

For this article, and more on teaching and education, be sure to check out our website:

<http://www.starteaching.com> Frank Holes, Jr. is the editor of the StarTeaching website and the bi-monthly newsletter, Features for Teachers. Check out our latest issue at:

[http://www.starteaching.com/Features\\_for\\_Teachers\\_2apr2.htm](http://www.starteaching.com/Features_for_Teachers_2apr2.htm) You can contact Frank at: [editor@starteaching.com](mailto:editor@starteaching.com)

Source: <http://www.edarticle.com>