

## Nonfiction lead... drafting an intro

5W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to explore a topic and convey ideas and information relevant to the subject.

5W2a: Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general focus, and organize related information logically.

I can introduce my topic by thinking about the important ideas, creative facts, and various ways to draw in my audience.

How will my learning be assessed today?

- my ability to introduce the main idea of my topic
- my ability to draw in my audience and keep them engaged with a catchy lead

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## Connection

Writers, right now, forget for a second that you are writers and imagine instead that you are property agents. Imagine that there is this new house on the market and that you have to sell it. Ah! here comes what looks like an easy customer, they look like they're desperately in need of a good home. And you have just the place to show them!

Turn to the person next to you and come up with what you'd say- how would you introduce the house to them?



Remember to explain the architectural design (how is the house structured).

How many stories, bedrooms, bathrooms?

Are there connecting rooms or any other cool features?

Where does the front door or kitchen open to

Sell this house, don't just give it a dull little introduction.

Don't harp on structure but convince them that the structure makes this house great, worth visiting and looking at.



fantastic and worth a visit- is a lot like the work that informational writers have to do!

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Link: There is a difference between a lead and an introduction. In an introduction, we tell a reader what we will tell them, tell it to them—then tell them what we just told them. That puts your reader to sleep. We have to engage the reader by getting them into the material right away. We can't wait. Today we will think about our leads. This is the first tempting bite your reader gets of your writing or think of it as reeling them in. But if it is boring the reader will move on.



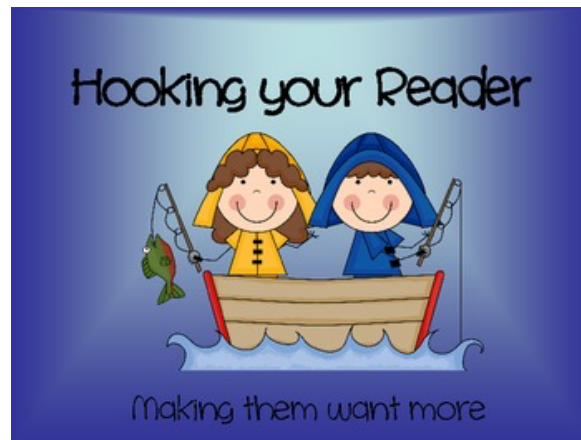
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A good lead does the following:

It grabs the reader's attention and inspires the reader to read further. This is called a hook.

It tells the reader why the piece was written.

It tells the reader why he/she ought to read the article or essay.





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Model

## Intro's set the reader up for what's inside!

For my English Bulldog intro I could have written..

The following paragraphs will describe a bulldogs history, physical features, special care, health issues, and the pro's and cons of having one as a pet.

The reader will know what to expect, right? But might as well give them a



pillow

and



blanket



and set them up for a nap!

I would rather hook my reader so they read on, like you did when you were being property agents just now. You didn't just talk about structure, you highlighted some fun, unique thing it had like a secret passage or Jacuzzi.

A good lead is enticing. It beckons. It promises the reader their time will be well-spent and sets the tone and direction of the piece. All great content starts with a great lead.

### There are many ways I can hook my readers...

There are many different ways to write as a river that we start too far upstream your lead by starting with the most important information



1. Think of your audience when we write, 2. You can sharpen your lead by revealing the most important information of the following:

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Model

## Lead Your Reader to the Facts



### + Narrative Lead: starting off with a short story

-Example: "Rodney Fox had almost run out of time. He needed to find a big fish- and he needed to find it soon." (from *Shark Attack!* Cathy East Dubowski)

- Example: This is Gordo. He is a 7 month old English Bulldog puppy and a victim of Breeding for Profit. It is very difficult for him to breathe because he as bred poorly and suffers from an elongated palate."

### + Scene- Painting Lead: descriptive or creative quotes

- Example: "Sunlight shines through seawater into a coral reef. The reef is an underwater world of brilliant colors and strange shapes. (from *Gail Gibbons, Coral Reef*)

- Example: "By the 15th century, in addition to catching horses, cattle, and boars in legitimate farming use, bulldogs were also used in the barbaric "sport" called bull-baiting, in which trained dogs would latch onto a tethered bull's nose and not let go until the dog had pulled the bull to the ground or the bull had killed the dog. The bulldogs today have gone on to become a popular companion and working animal, as well as a very widely used mascot, and one of the more famous corporate bulldogs is associated worldwide with Mack Trucks. " (from *John Bastian, The History of Bulldogs.*)

- Point out the descriptive lead in the **Bulldog Article** or in another **Mentor Article**.

### + Leads that Personalize the topic and speak straight to the reader with second person narrative--even injecting a little humor.

- Example: " Yikes! Bugs look scary close up. But you don't need to worry. Most bugs are a danger only to other insects. They are the bugs that really bug other bugs. (from *Jennifer Dussling, Bugs, Bugs, Bugs* p. 4-5)

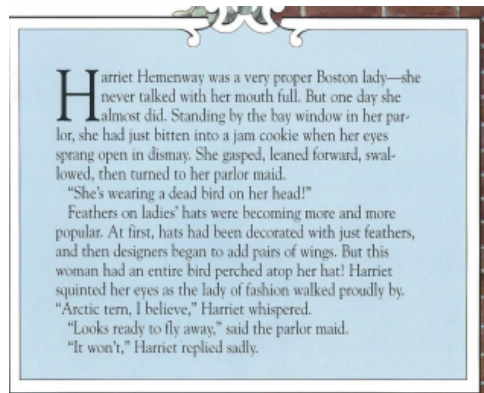


**Try thinking of one of these catchy leads for your writing and tell your partner.**

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## Lead Your Reader to the Facts

+ **Anecdote:** starting off with a short story. A brief story that reveals the essence and the heart of your subject. Similar to a narrative. Here's the lead for *She's Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head*, a book about Harriet Hemenway who started the Audubon society.



Harriet felt that she had to do something. Huge populations of birds, from egrets to pheasants to owls to warblers, were being slaughtered for hat decoration—none were spared. Not even pigeons! But what could she do? Women in 1896 had very little power. They could not vote, and many had husbands who did not allow them to make decisions for themselves. Some women were not even allowed to read newspapers! Harriet's husband, Augustus, did not treat her this way.

But she and other women like her wanted to change things for all women. And she wanted to do something for the birds. Fashion was killing birds as well as killing women's chances to have the right to vote and be listened to. For who would listen to a woman with a dead bird on her head? And if the senseless slaughter for a silly fashion was not stopped, in a few years the birds with the prettiest feathers would all be dead, gone forever, extinct.

"I must call cousin Minna," Harriet said grimly.

**Cite a surprising statistic or trend:**

"If trying to target the online community with your marketing efforts has felt like aiming a crossbow at a barn swallow, consider this: more people created Twitter accounts in 2010 than did all Twitter users in the prior three-and-a-half years. But a study at the end of 2009 found that about 25 percent of accounts having no followers and about 40 percent of accounts having never sent a single Tweet. Now where do you aim?"

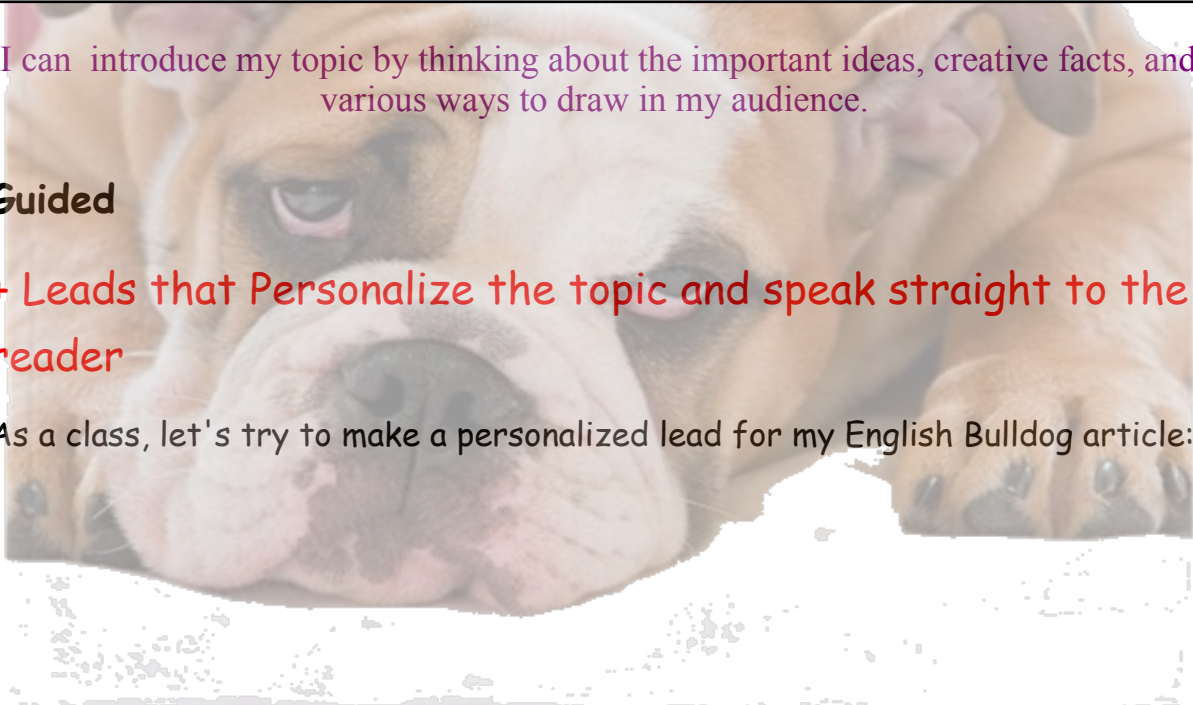
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## Lead Your Reader to the Facts

### + Other leads:

Quote leads: Quote leads work well for reports that need to keep to the point. A quote lead can give additional authority and a fresh voice to the story. but unless the quote is exceptionally special, it isn't the most original or exciting way to start your story.

- Question: involves the reader in the basic issue/focus of the story.
- Historical lead: places story in a historical context.
- Reader identification: shows reader how story relates to them.
- Problem: sets up problem that will be solved



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**Guided**

+ Leads that Personalize the topic and speak straight to the reader

As a class, let's try to make a personalized lead for my English Bulldog article:

[click to see the other example I came up with](#)

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## Mid-workshop Interruption

Now I see you are all doing a good job with trying one or two ways to hook or intrigue your readers. **Remember to keep your audience in mind.** Who will be reading this? I also want to remind you that a great introduction has to give the reader a clear idea of what your article will contain and how it will be structured.

So, don't forget to include your **Thesis, the angle you th, and your sub-topics.**



### English Bulldogs

#### Introduction

Descriptive lead

Thesis and angle

Sub-topics

There are thousands of breeds of dogs in the world. Each has its own special characteristics and history. One in particular stands out from the rest. This dog has the face of a curmudgeon but the personality of a best friend. This special dog is the English Bulldog. Thousands of Americans own them. They came to America in the 17th century. **Owning an English Bulldog is wonderful, but it needs special care because of the many health problems it has.** Get ready to learn all about the **history of English Bulldogs, the physical characteristics of English Bulldogs, and also to get some important tips on taking care of Bulldogs properly**



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## You Do- Independent Practice

1) Ask yourself...What do I want to teach readers at the beginning?

Who is my audience and how can I draw them in?

What are the important ideas, unique or attention-catching facts I have found?

2) On loose leaf, draft out one or two of these catchy leads that will hook your reader. Use the Nonfiction Lead chart as a reminder of ways you can grab your audience.

## Nonfiction Leads:

### Lead Your Reader to the Facts

+ **Narrative Lead: starting off with a short story**

- Example: This is Gordo. He is a 7 month old English Bulldog puppy and a victim of Breeding for Profit. It is very difficult for him to breathe because he as bred poorly and suffers from an elongated palate."

+ **Scene- Painting Lead: descriptive or creative quotes**

- Example: "Sunlight shines through seawater into a coral reef. The reef is an underwater world of brilliant colors and strange shapes. (from Gail Gibbons, Coral Reef)

+ **Leads that Personalize the topic and speak straight to the reader**

- Example: " Yikes! Bugs look scary close up. But you don't need to worry. Most bugs are a danger onlty to other insects. They are the bugs that really bug other bugs. (from Jennifer Dussling, Bugs, Bugs, Bugs p. 4-5)

3) Begin with a quote, story, descriptive fact or personalized idea and then move into stating the THESIS and previewing the SUBTOPICS that will follow. Don't forget to keep an angle in mind!

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## SHARE

Which type of lead did you use for your piece?

Why did you feel this would be the best lead?



### Lead Your Reader to the Facts

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