

How Can I Begin a Story?

Here are some ways to get a reader involved in your story:

1. Describe the setting. Give detailed sounds, sights, smells, and/or locations that draw the reader into your story. Make sure it ties into the point of your piece.
2. Make a “feeling” statement to set the main character’s emotional tone. Is he/she enthusiastic, calm, angry, confused, excited, frightened...etc.? For example: “Jan was disgusted by her little brother’s failure to put the milk away. It was the third day in a row that she’d had to put lukewarm milk on her cereal.”
3. Describe a character. This might include his/her/its physical appearance, or personality traits, or both. Be careful not to drag it out too long!
4. Start with a conversation (dialogue.) Make sure it is dialogue that leads into the main point of the story.
5. Hint at something important, exciting, strange, or mysterious that is about to happen. Try to avoid “It all started when...” beginnings. The word “it” is lazy! A better way: “When I looked out the window and saw water running down the street, I sensed this day would not be an ordinary day.”
6. Put the reader in the thick of the action right from the start. For example: “Dad noticed the snake microseconds before I did, but it was too late. Its venomous strike reached my leg before I could jerk it away. Wildlife scattered as my screams echoed down the hillside.”
Now go back and get into the specifics that lead to the main point.
7. Open your story with a question. (“Have you ever been involved in a situation where you knew someone was doing a bad thing, but you were afraid to say anything about it?”)
8. Start with a simple statement - one that is key to your main point. For instance, if you’re going to write about a terrible experience at the fair, you might begin with: “I hate county fairs.”
Now go on to give the whole account...