

A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing a Compelling Article Introduction

Wouldn't it be great if every single person who clicked on one of your articles read it from start to finish, unable to pull their eyes away from the screen?

Writing introductions? Isn't that kind of a small detail of a 2,000-word article? Your article intro is *not* a small detail.

The introduction to your article is often the difference between an engaged and disengaged reader. Think about it. If you don't grab your readers *right away*, you'll [lose them](#).

You went through all that work of writing a killer article, right? You worked hard at it. You spent a lot of time on it. You did a ton of research.

But if your introduction sucks, your efforts will be all for nothing. You lost before you even got started!

Let's discuss mastering writing introductions.

1. Master the opening line

To have a strong introduction, you need to open with a strong first sentence.

The first sentence has one single purpose: to entice the reader to read the next sentence. In doing so, it sets the tone for the rest of the article, hooking the reader in, one step at a time.

If you fail at this, what do you think will happen?

Check out [this article by Dilbert author Scott Adams](#) to see how the first sentence is done.

He writes this:

I went from being a bad writer to a good writer after taking a one-day course in "business writing."

That's a great opening line.

Why? Because it makes me want to know *more!*

- How did he become a good writer?
- What did he learn?
- Could I benefit from it too?

Adams nailed it. He drew us in by making us ask questions.

If you don't know how to craft an intriguing first sentence, the remaining 980 words of your article will be a complete waste.

[Save your writing introduction ideas](#) in one place across all the document apps you use.

Luckily for you, with a few simple tricks, writing a phenomenal first sentence can be quite easy.

The first thing to keep in mind is that you want to keep the first sentence short. This makes it easy for the reader to digest the first bits of information and prevents them from losing interest quickly.

But there is more to it than that.

You have to make sure that the first sentence grabs the reader's attention and holds it for the rest of the article.

Here are a couple of tried-and-true tactics that make for super compelling first lines.

Ask the reader a question

This is an easy way to [get the reader's attention](#) and get them engaged without a whole lot of effort on your part.

We want to know the answer to that question, so we keep reading. That's why a question is a great opening line.

Tell a story

The brain also lights up when it encounters a story.

According to the theory of neural coupling, certain [portions of the brain are activated](#) when a reader thinks about the same mental and physical activity that a character in a story is doing.

James Clear usually starts his blog articles with a story, often a true story.

The story makes his readers interested in the article and keeps them reading to the very end.

Use a shocking quote

Another great way to start your article is to use an attention-grabbing quote.

Let's say you are writing an article on world travel. A great way to introduce the article would be with the quote from Helen Keller:

"Life is a daring adventure or nothing at all."

Tell the reader to imagine

Sparking the imagination is an instant way to draw the reader into the experience of the article.

Notice how this article from [Wired For Story](#) begins:

The reader tries to obey the imperative by imagining. This effort compels the reader to read further, drawing them into the article.

Writers for *The Atlantic* are experts at their craft. This writer does the same thing—asking the reader to *imagine*.

Share an interesting fact

In a day and age when the Internet is so rife with crappy information and fraudulent “gurus,” people are skeptical. They have every reason to be.

Opening your article with a relevant fact or statistic is a great way to [establish trust and authority](#) from the first sentence and let readers know you've done your research.

2. Have something unique to say

Okay, so you've crafted an excellent first sentence, and you have your reader's interest.

Now what?

Now, you have to hold that interest by having something interesting and uncommon to say.

Very few people take the time and energy to regularly produce new, thought-provoking content. If you do, you'll set yourself apart from the herd in a big way.

Forget [re-purposing of old articles](#) or rewriting stuff from other people's websites. If you want to have the reader's respect and attention, you have to say something they've never heard before.

Unfortunately, a lot of the stuff you read today has been regurgitated 28 times before.

Let's imagine you run a travel blog. Based on my advice, you write a number of [3,000-word](#) comprehensive "How-To Guides."

Whenever a reader opens your guide on financing their first around the world trip, they'll expect to read all about airline rewards programs, frugality, and credit card points.

And that information is great, but it is also very generic.

A [better introduction](#) would be something like this:

How would you like to save up enough money in the next 6 months to spend all of 2017 traveling the world?

That would be pretty epic, right?

Well, this is entirely possible, and in today's article, I am going to show you how you can do this.

It's not by skipping your morning latte or spending thousands of dollars with your credit cards on a few hundred miles either.

I am going to show you how you can create a life of mobility and freedom by leveraging the skills you already have, tactically selecting your destinations, and using a little known tax secret that will save you thousands of dollars!

Sound good? Let's get to it.

It's hard to be different. I realize that.

Sometimes, in order to create unique stuff, we simply have to work harder, think longer, and research more than our competition.

Here are some ways you can develop that unique voice in your article introduction:

- Share a personal story or fact. You're the only *you* there is. You can share a story or experience no one else can. One way to tell such a story is to write, "If you know me..."
- Get your emotions in it. People have an emotional reaction to emotions. When we convey our emotions in our writing, people tend to respond. Besides, emotion is also a unique and personal thing. How do you communicate this in an introduction? Easy: "Want to know how I feel about it? I feel..."
- Share your goals or vision. If you have a guiding goal or vision for life, you can communicate this in your introduction. "That's one of the reasons I wrote this post. My goal in life is to..."
- Make a promise. A promise is a personal and attention-grabbing thing. Give your readers a promise, and it will secure their loyalty and their interest. "I promise that I'll do my dead-level best to..."

[Unique isn't easy](#). But it's worth it.

3. Keep it simple

We live in a world where most people have an attention span of only a few seconds.

Apparently, our attention span is [getting shorter!](#)

After a few seconds, we get bored and move on to the next shiny object.

If you want your readers to make time in their days to read what you have to say, make sure you [present things as simply as possible](#).

Longer articles, of course, deserve longer introductions. But it's important to respect people's time and attention. You can't change what *is* (people's short attention spans) by writing a long introduction based on what *should* be (longer attention spans).

Avoid rambling about how great your information is, and just share it already!

4. Speak directly to the reader

Whenever you are writing educational material for other people, you want to use the word "you" as much (and as naturally) as possible.

In this article, I've used some variation of the word *you* more than 100 times. Why? Because I'm talking to *you!* I want *you* to know this information. I want *you* to benefit from it.

By emphasizing the word "you" in your article, you show the reader you are directly addressing them and their situation and not just writing a generic article to the general populace.

But there's another side to this. I should refer to myself as well. My goal is to convey a personal feel to this article. After all, it's *me* talking to *you*, right? So it's only natural that I would refer to myself too.

5. Explain what the article is about

The point of an introduction is exactly that: to *introduce* the content that will be presented in an article.

I cannot tell you the number of times online articles left me confused even I after I'd read a few of their paragraphs.

I couldn't tell whether the authors were teaching me how to [run successful Facebook ads](#), or telling me a weird story about their childhood.

Take a few sentences, and clearly explain what the article is going to cover without giving away too many details.

This will build suspense around the subject matter while still letting your audience know what they may be in for.

[A great example of this](#) comes from the Buffer blog. Notice how the introduction poses a question and then proposes to *answer* that question.

Your curiosity stays high, but the introduction sets the stage.

6. Explain the importance of the article

Once you've explained *what* the article is, now it's time to explain *why* people should care.

Everyone on the Internet approaches every new piece of information with a simple question: "[What's in it for me?](#)"

If you want to write introductions that hook the reader and [help your content go viral](#), you have to master the art of explaining what the reader stands to gain from the information you are sharing—the benefits.

How will it benefit your readers' lives? How will it solve a problem they are facing? How will it cure a pain they are feeling?

If you understand how to quickly and efficiently answer these questions, you'll keep your readers glued to your article till the last word.

Conclusion

Few things can make or break your article as easily as an introduction.

If you can master the art of the first few paragraphs, you'll be able to increase reader engagement, improve sales, and earn a reputation as a phenomenal writer.

It's not an easy skill to master, but like many things in Internet marketing, it's fairly straightforward.

If you put in the work, you'll get results.

