Some Types of Introductory Leads

The purpose of an introductory lead is to immediately grab the readers’ attention with a dynamic, interesting, and engaging hook into your more formal essay. Leads comprise the first portion of your introductory paragraph or exist as a paragraph or paragraphs before the introduction. In any case, the lead should blend into your essay to smoothly and gracefully guide the reader in.

Narrative Lead: story or anecdote before information to interest readers

All you can do is sit there and watch as your ship lurches, signaling the exit of hyperspace. Suddenly your ship is put into the middle of a fierce intergalactic battle. You glance quickly behind you before your targeting system picks up a stray enemy fighter. Now just a hundred yards in front of you is your quarry. With a sudden burst of adrenaline your heart begins to beat faster and faster as you wait for the targeting crosshairs to turn red. Now just moments away from turning your enemy into disarranged particles of carbon, a warning light flashes. You turn around just in time to see a missile of another enemy fighter slam into the right engine of your craft. You wait for the next screen to appear, and you press “New Game.”

“Okay,” you remark, “let’s try this level again.”

[Video games help to escape and manage stress especially for kids. One study suggests that…]  (Written by an eighth grader)

Quotation Lead: beginning with a conversation or statement

“Wrestling is a worthless sport!” cried my mother. I wrestle for the school’s team and it is important to me. Athletics are a big thing at my school but some parents, like my mom, think the money would be better spent on computers for the classrooms. I disagree. Being on an athletic team has taught me just as much as being a student.

Question Lead: evokes curiosity by asking a question

Supposedly, Albert Einstein failed math in fifth grade. How did he become a famous scientist if he could not pass math? Just because you do not do well in school does not mean you are not smart.

Statistical Lead: starts with facts or figures to impress the reader

Child abuse is becoming one of the fastest growing acts of violence in the United States. According to the American Humane Association, 1.4 million cases of child abuse were reported in the U.S. in 1982. Nearly 1/5 of these victims were teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17.  (Written by an eighth grader)
**Mystery Lead:** keeps the reader in suspense by leaving out information

I was embarrassed. That’s the only emotion in the English language to describe a scenario that I shamefully remember as The Ballpark Incident. (Written by a middle school student)

Tense, and white to the lips, Angie Lowe stood in the door of her cabin with a double-barreled shotgun in her hands. Beside the door was a Winchester ’73, and on the table inside the house were two Walker Colts. *The Gift of Cochise*, Louis L’Amour

**Descriptive Lead:** gives the reader a visual idea by using details

Leaping into the air and grasping the creature in her paws, the cat lands on all four legs victoriously. But this is no ordinary cat. This is a cat named Sunny. Sunny is my one year old kitten that is full of enough energy to pull a [tractor trailer] across the country. (Written by a middle school student)

It was a dark and stormy night... *(A Wrinkle in Time, Madeleine L’Engle)*

**Imagine Lead:** the writer asks the readers to put themselves in the situation

Imagine this, you are sitting at home and the next thing you know you get this disease and your blood starts to clot. In other words, you freeze, right there. This is what happens in Michael Crichton’s *The Andromeda Strain*. (Written by a middle school student)

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you’ll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me,... *The Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger