

Opening Strategies in a Public Genre

Purposes: To identify consistencies and differences between the introductions of academic essays and those of public genres; to understand what an audience expects from— and how they respond to— introductions in public genres

Task: Locate a model or two that offer a structure, focus, and/or style that you can refer to as you draft your own piece. Use the model(s) to answer the prompts below. Then, write an introduction for your piece and bring it to the next class for peer review.

1. Look for the following moves of an introduction in the model(s) you have selected. The moves echo those in an academic essay, but the introductions of public genres often open with a hook and include an explicit significance. At times, these moves will overlap; for example, the hook and common ground might be one and the same.

Hook: A striking fact, quotation, or anecdote

Current situation/common ground/stable context: What the audience already knows about the topic or needs to know in order to understand the piece

Research question/problem statement/destabilizing ideas or information: A question, contradiction, or a problem that shows why the matter needs to be discussed

Significance: A sense of why the audience should care about this problem or question

Answer/main claim/thesis. Promise of or preliminary answer to this question or solution to the problem.

2. How does the author hook the audience? Describe the approach.
3. How does the author establish a current situation/common ground/stable context for the ideas in the piece? Describe the approach.
4. How does the writer present a question or problem and help us to understand why we should care about it?
5. How does the writer present an answer or claim? How does it differ from the kinds of claims we've seen in academic essays?
6. Try a *technical imitation* of the first few sentences. Each word should more or less follow the grammatical pattern of your model, using your own topic as new content. (No, this is not plagiarism.)

Opening Strategies in a Public Genre: Peer Review

Task: Exchange your nonacademic genre introductions with a peer. As you read your partner's draft, make notes on the following questions and then discuss together.

1. How does the introduction appeal to the curiosity of a smart, non-expert audience?
2. How does the introduction make a connection between the topic of research and something going on here and/or now?
3. What is the question or problem that motivates the piece? How does the writer generate interest and the sense that this is a question or problem worth learning about?
4. What is the claim of the piece? Does it address the question or problem in a way that makes you eager to read on/keep listening?
5. Read the technical imitation your partner produced in response to Question 6 (above). Does it work? Do you think the writer should incorporate this language? If so, any suggestions about how?