

Content Creation Made Easy

Module #1: Templates and Tools
20 Opening Paragraphs

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Swipe File: 20 Opening Paragraphs

No matter what kind of content you create – from articles to books to videos – you’re always going to be required to create introductions for your content. And if you’ve spent any amount of time writing content, then you know there are two problems with introductions:

- 1. The introduction is often the hardest part to write.** Many people struggle and sweat as they try to pound out an introduction. Some people even write the rest of the content and then go back and write the intro. That’s because the intro is one of the most important parts of your entire content piece – if it doesn’t hook and enthrall your readers, they’re going to leave.
- 2. Your readers (and you) will get bored if all your introductions are the same.** You know you get bored writing the same types of intros over and over, especially if it’s the “stock” introduction (see #1 below). And you can bet your audience gets bored reading the same introduction.

Fortunately, this report solves both of your problems.

That’s because you’re about to discover –

20 different introductions that you can use for just about any type of content.

Not only will you never again struggle to write your introduction, but your readers won’t get bored.

Let’s jump in...

1. Tell ‘Em What You’re Going to Tell ‘Em

This is the traditional introduction, where you simply tell your readers what they’ll learn about in the upcoming pages.

Because this introduction is so popular and so useful, you may even use it in combination with some of the other introductions that you'll learn about later in this report.

Template:

[Some specific problem, like "divorce" or "hair loss"] is a growing problem for [the type of people for whom this is a problem].

Fortunately, however, [specific group of people] don't have to suffer from [description of problem] once they know how to [description of how to solve the problem].

That's what you'll learn about in [this report/article/video or other type of content piece].

Specifically, you'll learn how to [provide description of exactly what the readers will learn]. You'll also find out how to [insert description of something else important that's covered in the content]. And you'll even discover [insert description of a third major piece of information that the reader will learn].

So, without further introduction, let's jump in with a discussion of [insert description of the first thing you'll talk about in the content]...

2. Pose a Question

Within this report you'll discover multiple ways to open your content with a question. In this case, you're going to ask a question that the content will answer.

Examples:

- Which is better: long sales letters or short sales letters?
- Does caffeine really boost the metabolism?
- What are the leading symptoms of Alzheimer's disease?

What you'll want to do is pose your question and then provide an overview of how the content will answer that question.

Template:

[Insert your question, such as "How does caffeine affect the metabolism?"]

If you're like a lot of [type of people, such as "fitness enthusiasts"], you've probably wondered [more in depth explanation of the question]. Maybe you've even wondered [insert some related question].

Truth is, there's a lot of contradictory and even outright false information floating around about [topic].

That's why we rolled up our sleeves and uncovered all the latest [type of research]. And what we discovered is that [give quick overview of what you learned / the answer to the question].

Surprised?

Then you'll be even more surprised when you discover [insert description of some other point you learned about in your research]. Read on to find out [more about this topic]...

3. Share a Statistic

No matter what niche you're working in, you can probably uncover a statistic of interest to your readers.

Examples:

- The number of households with dogs in the United States.
- The average age of marriage for males and females in Canada.
- How many women get assaulted before they're 25 years old.

There are all sorts of places you can find these statistics, including:

- Reference sites (like Wikipedia.com - but always double check the facts elsewhere).
- Authority sites (like WebMD.com).
- Scholarly journals (check Google Scholar).
- Trusted news sites (like the BBC.co.uk).

Once you find a suitable statistic, state it in your intro and tell readers how it affects them.

Template:

It's a frightening statistic: [insert your statistic].

That's a lot of people [with this problem], isn't it? And yet most people completely ignore these statistics. They think there's no way [some problem] could happen to them. But just ask the [large number] people who're affected by [this problem], and they'll tell you that it can and does happen. And they'll also tell you the best thing you can do is be prepared.

That's what this [article/report/book/etc] is about.

In just moments you'll find out how to [protect yourself from becoming a statistic]. Read on...

4. Offer a Quote

Another good way to introduce your topic is by sharing a related quote. This quote might be:

- A thought-provoking quote that you find on a site like brainyquote.com.
- A quote from another person in your niche.
- A quote from a news source.

Or any other relevant quote.

Once you introduce the quote, then you can quickly tie in how it applies to the content that you're writing and how it applies to the reader.

Template:

[Insert quote and author here.]

The first time I heard that quote, I [describe what you first thought of when you first read the quote]. Over time, however, this has grown to be my favorite [topic] quote, simply because [explain

why this quote is so important - not just to you, but also to the reader]. In fact, I think every aspiring [type of person] would do well to read this quote, understand it and start applying it to [a specific niche activity, like "their marathon training" or "their business"].

Of course telling someone to apply [insert description of this quote/information] and actually doing it are two different things. And that's why you're about to learn [insert description of what they'll learn in this content - specifically as it relates to the quote].

Let's jump in...

5. Provide an Anecdote

I bet you have a related anecdote (story) you can share to kick off the introduction to your content. And what a great way to do it, since sharing a story builds rapport with readers, keeps them interested in what you're saying and even makes your content more memorable.

Examples:

- You could share a story of a huge mess your dog made when he was left alone (great intro for an article on separation anxiety).
- You could share an embarrassing gym moment for a bodybuilding article.
- You could share a story about visiting the dentist in a report about how to care for one's mouth and teeth.

Let me give you an example of such an opener.

Template:

I almost couldn't believe what had happened: [insert description of something shocking you saw, heard or felt, such as seeing the dog had ripped up the couch in your absence].

I'm sure you can just imagine how I felt. I was [describe how you felt]. And that's the day I realized I needed to [describe how you needed to fix a problem].

It took about [length of time], but I pulled it off. Today [describe how things are much better now]. And the good news is that you too [can fix this problem]. Here's how...

6. Tell Someone Else's Story

It's not a problem if you don't have your own story to share, as you can always share someone else's story. This might be the story of a friend, family member, coworker or even someone you heard about.

Example: You might share a story of how your grandparents overcame poverty to become successful in business.

Here's one way to create this introduction.

Template:

My friend [name] just told me about how he [describe what this person did]. Apparently [insert more in depth description of what person did], and he even [more description]. And the worst part was that he [insert bad part].

Tell you what, you don't want to make THAT mistake! Even today, [name] is still working to [clean up the mess caused by the problem].

Fortunately you can avoid [having this same problem] by using these [number] helpful hints...

7. Recap a News Story

Here you can open the introduction to your content by recounting a news story which directly affects your readers.

Examples:

- An article about weight loss might start with a news story about how a diet drug was taken off the market.
- A report about choosing a new puppy might start with a news story about how many puppies are abandoned at shelters every year.

See the next page for a complete template...

Template:

Recently, [name of news organization] reported that [enter overview of the news article]. They also found out that [enter another main point of the article here].

You can read the entire article here [link to the original source, if applicable, or tell people where to find it if it's an offline source].

This news is [troubling/exciting/ or some other descriptor] for [group of people], because [reason why it's troubling or exciting]. What's more, [insert how this news directly affects the reader].

The good news is that you can [insert description of what the person can do about this news, which is what your content is about].

Here's how...

8. Get Them Thinking

When you use words like "imagine" or phrases like "picture this," your readers actually DO start imagining whatever it is that you're talking about. Thus by using these words, you can get them thinking deeply about an issue, their pain, what it would be like if their problem was gone, or even a story that you're telling them.

Template:

Picture for a moment what it would be like if [the reader didn't have a specific problem anymore]. Imagine how you'd feel if [some problem wasn't a problem anymore]. Just picture [how joyous life would be without this problem].

The good news is that dreaming about [getting rid of a problem] isn't just a fantasy - it CAN happen.

And all you have to do to [get rid of this specific problem] is [take some specific action].

Here's how...

9. Remind Them of Their Pain

If you're writing a "how to" content piece that will show people how to alleviate their suffering and get rid of one of their problems, then reminding them of their pain can be a good way to start. That's because it will motivate people to seek out a solution - and thus people will be more likely to take action on what you're instructing them to do.

Tip: You can combine this opener with the last opener, by using words like "imagine" to graphically remind people of the pain of their problem. You can also combine this with Openers #5 or #6, where you share a story about your pain or someone else's pain.

Here's a template that you can tweak...

Template:

[Having a specific problem like "being overweight"] is no fun.

It [describe a major downside of the problem such as "people make fun of you"]. You also [describe another downside, such as "get out of breath easily"]. And sometimes you even [insert another downside, like "hate buying new clothes because none of them fit right"].

When you start having more bad days than good, that's when you know it's time to make a change. That's when you know it's time to [solve this specific problem]. And that's exactly what you're about to learn how to do, so read on...

10. Define a Term

If your article, book or other content piece centers around some term with which your readers might be unfamiliar, then you can open by defining this term. Then you can go on to explain how this term affects your readers.

Example: A bodybuilding article about creatine might start by defining creatine. Then the intro can provide an overview of how bodybuilders use creatine in their muscle-building efforts.

Here's a sample opener...

Template:

Are you familiar with [insert term]? If not, let me start by defining it for you:

[Insert definition]

The reason I wanted to define it is because so many people assume [that the term means something entirely different]. And that's why these same folks [make some type of specific mistake, based on their misunderstanding].

Now that you know what [term] means, let me share with you how [a certain group of people] are using [term] to [get some specific result] - and how you can too. Read on for the eye-opening details...

11. Get Readers to Self-Qualify

If you want a targeted audience to read your content, then one way to make sure they're ultra-targeted is by "qualifying" them.

This is where you essentially get them to raise their hands, step forward and say, "Yes, I'm a part of this target market."

And one great way to do that is by asking a series of qualifying questions. Usually, if the reader answers "yes" to one or more of the questions, then he'll realize you wrote the article for him - and he'll keep reading.

Here's a sample "self-qualifying" opener...

Template:

Do you ever [suffer from some problem, such as “get watery eyes when you spend time outside”]? Have you ever [dealt with some other specific side effect of the problem]? And do you ever wish that you could [get rid of the problem]?

If so, you’re not alone. And fortunately, you CAN [be free from first problem] and [get rid of the second problem] – and it’s a lot easier than you think. Here’s how...

12. Be Controversial or Shocking

This is another opener that you could easily combine with some of the other methods described in this report (such as the method of citing a statistic).

Basically, the idea here is to hook the reader in the first line by saying something they didn’t expect and/or something they didn’t want to hear.

Here’s an example...

Template:

[Insert shocking line, such as “There’s a good chance your child is going to be bullied in school this year – and you’ll never even know.”]

It’s shocking, isn’t it? And the worst part is that [tell what the worst part is]. But fortunately, you can fight back.

You can prevent this. You can protect yourself [from this unwanted thing]. And all you have to do is [learn how to take some specific action]. Here’s how...

13. Share the Benefits

The very first opener I told you about is the one where you “tell ‘em what you’re going to tell ‘em” – in other words you summarize what’s in store for the reader.

This opener is similar, except here you focus on sharing the benefits of the upcoming content. In other words, how will the reader benefit once they've read and/or applied this information?

Tip: Here's a good chance for you to "tease" the reader by arousing curiosity. You can do this by stating a benefit, but not exactly sharing how the person will receive that benefit. The sample opener below shows you how to do this.

Here's an example...

Template:

If you've ever wanted to learn how to [achieve some goal or perform some specific action], you're in luck. That's because this [report/article/video/post or other content piece] will reveal to you [some major secret]. Indeed, in just moments you'll discover:

- How to [get some benefit].
- A surprisingly simple way to [get another benefit].
- A nifty trick for [getting a third benefit].

Read on to learn more...

14. Start With a Bang

The idea here is to show the value of your content right away as a means of getting people excited about the content. And you do that by sharing some useful information in your introduction, such as an actionable tip.

Example: If you're writing about housetraining a dog, then you might share your #1 tip upfront, such as getting the right-sized kennel or crate for the dog.

Here's a sample opener...

Template:

Don't you hate when you try to [get some specific result], but you end up [getting an undesirable result] instead?

The reason this usually happens is because [describe a common mistake]. However, all you have to do fix this is [describe how to avoid this mistake so that the reader can get a good result].

That's one way to start getting better results when you [perform a specific action or try to achieve a specific goal].

Here are [number] other tips to help you [get a desired result]...

15. Provide an Analogy or Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech where you compare two things, but the metaphor isn't meant to be taken literally. On the other hand, an analogy is when you compare two things in a logical manner to show their relationship.

Usually, an analogy uses the word "like" (X is like Y, because _____).

Examples:

- An analogy: My hands are so cold they feel like ice.
- A metaphor: I am an icicle. (You aren't literally an icicle - rather, you're using a figure of speech to indicate you are cold).

Here's a sample opener with an analogy...

Template:

[Insert analogy or metaphor, such as "Making a sale is like popping the marriage question - you need to "court" your prospect first"].

Of course most people miss this step. They think [insert common misconception]. And so when they [start to do some process or achieve some goal], they wind up [getting a bad result].

You can avoid this. And all you have to do is start treating [something, like "your prospects"] like [some other thing relevant

to the opening analogy, such as “your fiancée] – in other words, you need to [insert description of what the reader needs to do to start getting a good result]. Here’s how...

16. Inject Humor

Depending on what you’re writing about, you may be able to open with a joke or some other humor. Keep in mind, however that humor is subjective. Different people find different things funny, and the gap widens even more when you cut across cultures. As such, if you use humor, then try to use humor that you’re fairly certain will resonate with your audience.

Template:

How many [types of people] does it take to screw in a light bulb?

Answer: [total number] – [number] to [perform some specific action] and [number] to [do some other specific action].

That’s funny, right? And the reason so many people find it funny is because there’s a grain of truth in that joke. Specifically, many [types of people] tend to [do some specific thing that’s related to the opening joke].

But I know you don’t want to be a punch line in a joke. You don’t want to be one of those [types of people] who [do some silly or bad thing]. And that’s why you’ll be thrilled to discover the following [number] eye-opening tips for [getting a better result]. Read on...

17. Quiz Your Reader

If you’re writing a light-hearted piece, then you can certainly quiz your readers in a light-hearted manner.

Example: Just look in women’s magazines like Cosmopolitan, where they have quizzes such as, “Is your man romantic?”

However, primarily what I’m referring to here is to quiz your readers as a means of showing them their knowledge gaps. Then, your content can fill in these gaps by providing useful information.

Template:

Here's a quick quiz...

Question 1: True or false, [insert question, such as "longer sales letters work better than shorter sales letters"].

Question 2: True or false, [insert question].

Question 3: True or false, [insert question].

[Insert any other applicable questions.]

If you answered "true" to at least [majority number] of these questions, give yourself a pat on the back - you know quite a bit about [topic]. However, if you got even one wrong, then there's still more for you to learn.

Fortunately, you're about to learn everything you need to know about [specific topic] inside this [report/article/video or other content piece].

So roll up your sleeves, put on your thinking cap, and let's delve into the world of [topic]...

18. Ask a Rhetorical Question

Here's yet another "question" opener.

Except this time, you're asking a rhetorical question, which means you don't actually expect your reader to necessarily have an answer. Rather, you're asking the question as a means of getting your reader to think about some issue.

Template:

[Insert rhetorical question, such as "How many pounds have you lost and gained over the past decade of yo-yo dieting?"]

It's pretty frightening to think about, isn't it? And if you're like most people, you have no idea about the answer - and you'd rather not know. Because [insert description of why most people wouldn't want to know the answer to this question].

However, starting to [get some better result] means facing things we'd rather not face. And that includes [something related to the rhetorical question]. It may be painful. It may be difficult. But once you really [examine this issue], you'll be glad you did. And that's because you'll [get a desirable result].

So let's have a look at this [topic or type of] issue in more detail, and then you'll learn how to [get some specific desirable result].

Read on...

19. Tell Your Readers They're Wrong

What you're doing in this opener is debunking a myth OR correcting a common mistake. However, you don't want to be mean about it. You don't want to say, "you're wrong" in a nasty way. After all, no one likes to hear that they're wrong, so an offended reader is likely to click away from your content if you're delivery is unpleasant.

Here's an example of how to tell your readers they're wrong in a relatively non-offensive, polite way (in this case, we're shifting the blame to someone else)...

Template:

If you think [list some common misconception, mistake, etc], then you may be surprised to discover that you've been misled. The truth is, [insert the truth about the topic/issue].

But it's not your fault if you've [been believing something that's false] or perhaps even [making a mistake based on this false information]. That's because [reason why it isn't the reader's fault why he has false information].

The good news is that it's not too late [to repair the damage, turn things around, start getting better results with better information]. And it starts right here, right now, since you're about to discover [insert description of what the reader will learn about the right way to do something].

Let's get started...

20. Show Some Attitude

Here's a fun opener, because you take on a personality and show a little attitude. This is a good introduction to use for an opinion article, a rant article or even a controversial article. That's because this type of article can turn someone off, which is a reason why it's not appropriate for every niche or every topic.

Example: If you're writing about how someone's death changed an industry, taking on an attitude isn't appropriate.

Here's an example of showing attitude in the opener to a fun article...

Template:

[Some statement, with a question mark, of what other people are doing. Ex: "Get back with your ex?"] I don't think so.

Ha - you'd probably rather cover yourself in honey and lie down on a hill of fire ants. Heck ripping off your fingernails one by one sounds more pleasant than [the above-mentioned activity]. Even stubbing your toes two dozen times on a concrete block sounds less painful than [the above-mentioned activity].

So what's the fascination with [this specific activity]?

Who knows. But you can be dang sure that you won't ever see me buying some book or reading some blog post that teaches me how to [do above-mentioned activity].

That's because I can think of at least a million other constructive things I'd rather be doing, including these [number] activities...

Conclusion

Writer's block? No problem.

Tired of stale introductions? Definitely not a problem.

And that's because you just discovered 20 different openers to spice up any piece of content. Whether you're writing a blog post, an article for a newspaper or the introduction for a book, you can use any one of these openers to engage your readers and keep them hanging on your every word.

So now there's just one thing left for you to do – use them ASAP, starting with the very next content piece you create!