“Hooks”: The Lead Sentence of the Introduction

Let's focus now on the hook, the lead sentence of the introductory paragraph. If the introduction as a whole is important to draw readers in, then its lead sentence is especially so. The first sentence should "hook" the "fish," your readers, arousing their interest and encouraging them to forge ahead. In creating hooks, keep these points in mind:

1. **DO NOT** state the obvious. Here are some weak hooks:
   - Everybody has to have some kind of job or another.
   - I have a job in a deli.
   - Accidents can happen to people when they are at work.

As you can see, these obvious statements arouse no curiosity; in fact, they are just dead space, discouraging readers from enjoying what might be an interesting essay.

2. **DO** say something that will interest readers. Consider this hook:

   Would you like to keep all of your body parts intact today? How much do you value your eyesight, or that brain that keeps your body functioning?

Catherine wrote this essay with an audience of newly hired deli employees in mind. Notice that the hook is phrased as a question and that it begins to answer a question most readers ask: "What's in it for me? Why should I read this essay?" Also note that the hook extends into the next sentence, though it does not need to. For our purposes, we will talk about the hook as the first sentence, realizing that it can be more than one sentence and that it should blend easily into the rest of the introduction.

**METHODS FOR CREATING HOOKS**

- Ask a question.
- Begin with a line of dialogue.
- Begin with a quotation.
- Make a startling statement.
- Present an unusual fact.
- Use a vivid image.
- Create a comparison (possibly a metaphor or simile).
- Combination of methods.

Hooks, like the rest of the introduction up to the thesis sentence, are largely interchangeable, often overlapping pieces that can vary as much as a writer's imagination allows. For example, Catherine could have begun her essay with any of the following sentences:

**DIALOGUE**    "Aaggh! Help, I just splashed sanitizer in my eyes!"

**VIVID IMAGE**  Irritated customers shouting orders, pans clanging together, shirts soaked through with sweat—another shift at the deli is well underway.

**COMPARISON**   Although I have never been on a cattle ranch, I think I know what it feels like to be caught in the middle of a stampede.