

# a lead

A lead is the first sentence, or few sentences, in your writing. The purpose of a lead is to grab your readers' attention. Leads can be a:

**sense**  
**simple PHRase**  
**few of the 5 Ws**  
**simile OR metaphor**  
**SHOCKING Detail**  
**comma series**  
**QUESTION**

# senses

Appeal to your readers' senses. By focusing on one or two senses, your readers will be drawn into your story.

## see, Hear, taste, feel, and smell

"Each day Babushka would take the shell of an egg from her basket and paint it in wonderful designs, using shapes of stars and flowers, triangles and circles."

Rechenka's Eggs by Patricia Polacco

# simple PHRASE

Just say it! In a simple phrase that is less than 10 words.

**“Witches’ brooms don’t last forever.”**

The Widow’s Broom by Chris Van Allsburg

This is the easiest lead. It is usually a good idea to introduce a character, setting, or an interesting fact.

To be effective, it must grab your readers’ attention.

# five Ws

Use a few of the 5 Ws to help set the scene.

**WHO? WHAT? WHEN?  
WHERE? WHY?**

"Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the riverbank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, 'and what is the use of a book', thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversation?'"

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

# simile

A figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared. The phrase usually begins with *like* or *as*.

**as BIG as an elephant**  
**as BLIND as a Bat**  
**as mad as a HORNET**  
**tastes like GARBAGE**  
**SLEEPS like a LOG**

It is very important to not choose a well-known simile as your lead. Try to come up with an original one to show thoughtfulness.

**▪The reef looked like a red sand castle.▪**

*Goosebumps: Deep Trouble* by R.L. Stine

# metaphOR

A figure of speech that says one thing is another thing.  
Usually has the words *is, are, or was*.

**HIS HOUSE IS A DUMP.  
SHE IS A RAY OF SUNSHINE.**

**HER LIFE WAS A CIRCUS.  
HIS DOGS ARE DINOSAURS.**

Metaphors don't always use the words *is, are, or was*. These types of metaphors make your readers think.

**"It's a funny thing about mothers and fathers.  
Even when their own child is the most  
disgusting little blister you could ever imagine,  
they still think that he or she is wonderful."**

*Matilda* by Roald Dahl

# SHOCKING Detail

Capture your reader with a detailed visual.

**"If you were going to give a gold medal to the least delightful person on Earth, you would have to give that medal to a person named Carmelita Spats, and if you didn't give it to her, Carmelita Spats was the sort of person who would snatch it from your hands anyway."**

*The Austere Academy* by Lemony Snicket

# comma series

Instead of spreading out the details – PACK them into a list. This will give your readers lots of information and help them visualize your text.

“Hurricanes are huge spinning storms that develop in warm areas around the equator. Hurricanes bring strong winds, heavy rains, storm surges, flooding, and sometimes even tornadoes.”

Hurricanes by Seymour Simon

Try putting some shocking or unexpected detail in your list. It will HOOK your readers!



# QUESTION

When asking a question, start with one of these...

**WHO? WHAT?  
WHEN?  
WHERE? WHY?  
HOW?  
IS? ARE?**

Questions need to be detailed and thoughtful to be effective.

Never change the prompt into a question –  
or your lead will be extremely weak.

•The Iron Giant came to the top of the cliff.  
How far had he walked? Nobody knows. How was  
he made? Nobody knows."

The Iron Giant By Ted Hughes