

6+1 Writing Traits

Leads / Grabbers

No matter what you call them, they are designed to hook the reader — to cause him or her to want to read the rest of what you have written. Curiosity, humor, wonder, sympathy, anger, sorrow, fear, mystery, and shock are only a few of the possible reactions to a well-written lead or grabber. Here is a list of lead types drawn from a number of sources.

Analogy or Comparison: compares or contrasts two different things

Anecdote or Case History: provides a real-life scenario or nonfiction story

Direct Address: addresses the reader using second person “you”

Fact: contains an interesting bit of information about the topic

Metaphor: a figure of speech to show how two unlike things are similar in one important way; states something *is* something else

Description: explains the setting, characters, factual events, or an action; descriptions should use vivid, sensory language

One Word or Phrase: starts with a specific image or sound such as “Zing!”

Strong Controversial or Persuasive Statement: takes a stand on the topic; can also be shocking

Statistic: reveals a detail about the topic, based on quantitative data

Summary: crystallizes what will be addressed

Question: asks an *intriguing, interesting* question, often rhetorical

Emotional or Humorous Statement: causes readers to react emotionally

Quote, Dialogue, or Internal Thoughts of Author: can be very effective if the revelations are interesting

Mystery Statement: it raises questions rather than answering them

And, yes, it is possible to combine the characteristics of two or three leads to create something even more interesting. For example, you might choose to address the reader directly using a controversial statement or analogy — or a description that is humorous or emotional. The point is this: GET CREATIVE — DO NOT BE AFRAID TO EXPERIMENT.