

WRITING INTRODUCTIONS

UWF Writing Lab

The introduction of a multi-paragraph theme is somewhat like the introductory “tease” in a television commercial: both hope to attract people’s attention so that they will not turn away. Although advertising writers may rely on such standard visual devices as ravishing girls, virile athletes, appealing children, or breathtaking scenery, expository writers have none of these options; but they have others. By considering these other choices, you may find one that strikes your fancy if your own inspiration fails. Here are some possible attention-getting approaches:

A Controversial Statement

Some students swear that graduate teaching assistants are inexperienced, ignorant, and uninteresting; others insist that they are enthusiastic, friendly, and inspiring.

An Element Of Surprise

That slightly older guy, garbed in jeans and sweatshirt, sometimes with a beard, often with pipe, nearly always with a sack of books, who strides in late the first day of freshman class, is neither student nor professor but a peculiar species known as a graduate teaching assistant.

A Note Of Contradiction: Begin with a negative statement of your topic, followed by a positive or direct statement. This technique is useful when you are taking a position that contradicts prevailing opinion. It catches the reader off-guard by stating a widely held notion and then refuting it.

Graduate teaching assistants are neither fish nor fowl, neither completely students nor teachers, neither really graduates nor assistants.

A Short, Dramatic Statement

Beware of graduate teaching assistants.

The Use Of Statistics

Most of the two million freshmen entering colleges and universities this fall will be instructed by graduate teaching assistants.

A Figure Of Speech (simile or metaphor)

A graduate teaching assistant is like a pilot on a new route: each is capable, but each is unfamiliar with the course.

The Use Of Quotation: This may be an adage, epigram, excerpt from a poem or other literary work, or any famous or familiar quote. Be sure that the quote is used appropriately; that is, don’t begin with a quote simply for the sake of using it. Quotes may also be material from journals and periodicals.

“Although they are inexperienced, most graduate teaching assistants are generally instructors because they relate well to the students,” state the authors of The Writing Commitment.

Reference To A Current Event

The recent debate in the freshman dormitory about graduate teaching assistants was almost as heated as the one at the United Nations about the Third World.

Proof of Your Authority

Having had seven graduate teaching assistants in my first two semesters at college, I feel well qualified to discuss their strengths and weaknesses.

The Rhetorical Question: Sometimes the question stimulates interest because it seems to push the reader on to find an answer. However, this method has been employed so frequently that many sophisticated readers resent it as condescending or trite. Therefore, be careful in selecting this technique since it represents a desperate gamble: if readers reply “Yes” to the question, you’ve got them; but if “No,” you’ve lost them.

Do graduate teaching assistants make effective instructors?

The Definition: This technique is especially helpful if you’re addressing highly educated readers or if the subject lends itself to an interesting use of definition.

The dictionary definition of a graduate teaching assistant is “a graduate student with part-time complete or partial college teaching responsibilities.”

The Anecdote: Effective only when it relates to the subject being discussed and when it does not take up too much of the total length of the theme.

NOW, HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO TURN READERS OFF:

The Apology

Although I don’t know much about this subject, I thought I’d write a paper about it.

The Complaint

I started thinking about this paper after dinner and couldn’t come up with an interesting subject, but I finally decided on this one.

The Reference To The Title

The title of this paper, “Graduate Teaching Assistants,” indicates that it is concerned with....

The Platitude

Some graduate assistants have so many good possibilities that I can’t think of most of them, much less include them in a paper.

The Intent

In this theme, I plan to discuss the effects of having good graduate teaching assistants.

The Title Substitute Pronoun

They are effective because...