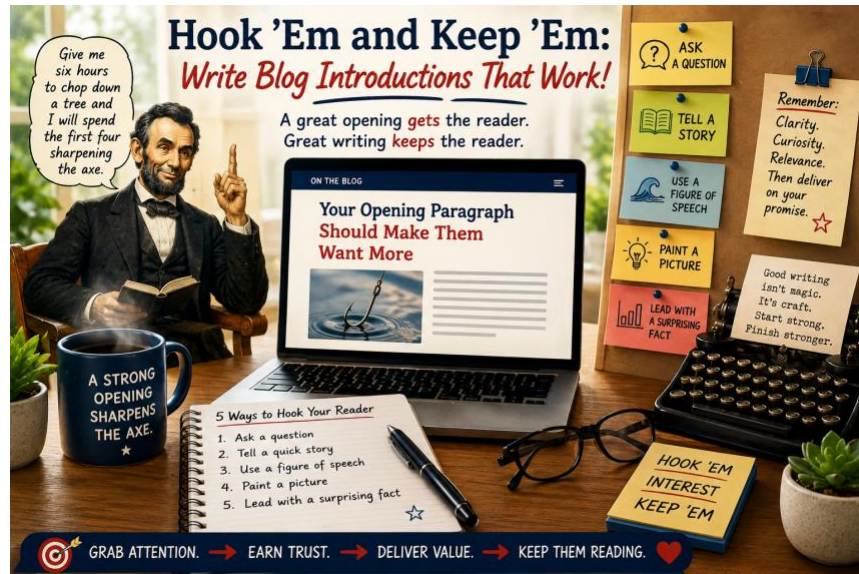




The Hook: How to Write a Blog Introduction That Keeps Readers Reading

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Abraham Lincoln would have made a great blogger. He had a funny story for almost every occasion, and he could usually tell it in two minutes or less. His disarming, folksy humor drew people in as they waited for the inevitable punch line—which often carried a lesson along with the laugh.

What do Old Abe's cornpone stories have to do with writing a blog? **It's all in the hook.** Today's online readers have almost unlimited choices competing for their attention. They aren't a captive audience, and clicking away takes considerably less effort than listening politely while somebody finishes a story. A blog introduction therefore has one important job: **Give the reader a reason to continue.**

The Headline Gets the Click. The Lede Gets the Reader.

Assuming your headline has done its job, the opening paragraph—or *lede*, to use the old journalism spelling—has to carry the reader forward. That's where otherwise good writers sometimes get stuck. They know their subject, have useful information and may even have a beautifully organized article waiting below. But where do they start?

The temptation is to spend two or three paragraphs clearing your throat before getting to the point. Don't. Your media-saturated reader may be gone before your blog gets its running shoes tied. A good introduction doesn't have to explain everything. It merely needs to establish enough interest, curiosity or relevance to make the reader want the next paragraph. There are plenty of ways to accomplish that. Here are five of my favorites.

1. Ask a Question

A question immediately gives the reader something to think about. I could have begun this article by asking: **Why aren't readers getting past the first paragraph of your blog?**

I might then suggest that your opening is so dull that readers would rather shave their heads with a cheese grater than endure another sentence. Admittedly, that's a little drastic. But now you'd probably want to know how to persuade them to put down the cheese grater and keep reading. That's the point. The question creates a small gap in the reader's knowledge, and the rest of the article promises to fill it.

2. Tell a Quick Story

Anecdotes are wonderful shortcuts into a subject because human beings naturally respond to stories. The Lincoln opening of this article is one example. Here's another. A drill sergeant was teaching recruits how to roll their socks.

“OK, listen up!” he growled. “What I'm about to show you could save your life one day. You will learn to roll your socks properly, or I will personally kill you.”

Old Sarge probably didn't mean the threat literally. He simply wanted everyone's undivided attention before demonstrating the proper way to roll socks. Mission accomplished. Your opening paragraph doesn't need to threaten anybody, but it does need to accomplish much the same thing: **Get their attention so they'll listen to what comes next.**

3. Use a Figure of Speech

Metaphors, similes and analogies connect a new idea with something already familiar to the reader. A well-written introduction can be a starter's pistol—the reader hears the shot and is off to the races. An opening paragraph can provide a jolt of caffeine to passive curiosity. If the reader is a surfer, the introduction can be the wave that carries him into the rest of the article.

And, of course, a good opening paragraph is *like*... Well, you can finish that simile yourself. Just remember to avoid clichés like the plague.

4. Put a Picture in the Reader's Mind

Words can create images almost as quickly as pictures do. Imagine spending hours writing the best blog article you've ever produced. You publish it, sit back proudly and wait for the response. Crickets. Somewhere in the distance, a tumbleweed rolls across the screen.

You've just created a mental picture of an article nobody is reading. More importantly, you probably want to know why. An effective visual image doesn't have to be elaborate. Give the reader something to see, hear or imagine, and you've already invited that reader into the story.

5. Lead With a Surprising Fact

Statistics and surprising facts can make excellent hooks, particularly when they challenge something the reader assumes to be true. But this technique comes with an important 2026 addition to my original advice: **Check your source.**

The Internet has never suffered from a shortage of dubious statistics, and artificial intelligence has made it easier than ever to repeat a convincing-sounding number without knowing where it came from. If you're going to tell readers that “73 percent of people” do something astonishing, make sure 73 percent of somebody actually did it. A trustworthy fact builds credibility. A bogus statistic destroys it.

Don't Let the Hook Become the Story

There's one caution worth adding to all five techniques: A clever introduction can become *too* clever. The Lincoln anecdote works only if I get from Lincoln to blog writing quickly. The drill sergeant has to lead somewhere. A metaphor should illuminate the subject rather than show everybody how clever the writer can be. That's the difference between a hook and a detour.

Once you've captured the reader's attention, get to the point and reward that attention with something worthwhile.

Give Them a Reason to Read Sentence Two

Blogging has changed considerably since I first wrote this piece in 2016. Search engines have changed. Social media has changed. Artificial intelligence has changed how people find information. The number of things competing for our attention has grown enormously. One thing hasn't changed: **The reader can leave.**

That's why the opening still matters. Ask a question. Tell a story. Create an image. Offer an intriguing comparison. Present a surprising and trustworthy fact. You don't need fireworks, trickery or breathless clickbait. You simply need to awaken enough curiosity to move the reader from sentence one to sentence two.

Then make sentence two earn sentence three. Do that often enough, and before the reader realizes it, you've got him.

Old Abe would understand.