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# Write an Interesting Lead

## Objective

The student will write a newspaper article with an interesting lead that establishes a context.

## Materials

- copy of page 147, *Lead Me On*, for each student
- whiteboard and whiteboard marker or chalkboard and chalk

## Directions

1. Select articles from several magazines or newspapers. Select articles that have an interesting beginning. Read these aloud to your students. Ask the students to share their opinions about how the reader began these articles. Discuss the definition of a lead with your students. A lead is sometimes referred to as a *hook*. Ask the students to speculate why the word hook is used. (The writer is hoping to hook the reader into the writing.) A lead is the way the writer begins an article or a story. A lead can be a sentence, a paragraph, or even a page long. In news stories, a lead is usually a sentence long. It is just enough to pull the reader in to read the article.
2. Brainstorm with your students a list of topics for newspaper articles. Record student responses on the board. Next, assign students to select one of these topics and write a lead that can be used to hook the reader into reading the imaginary article. Once students have finished, spend time sharing leads as a class. Discuss what the criteria is for a good lead. This criteria includes the following:
  - **Personal Experience** – Share an experience you had on the topic. The reader is usually interested in learning from others' experiences.
  - **Strong Visual Image** – Encourage the reader to picture something in his or her mind. This technique usually begins with "Think back to a time when..." or "Picture in your mind..."
  - **Rhetorical Question** – Asking a question usually gets the reader thinking. There is a natural instinct to answer a question.
  - **Facts and Statistics** – Using startling facts and statistics can surprise and shock the reader into wanting more information on the topic. Remember for this type of lead to be effective, the facts and statistics need to be accurate.
  - **Dialogue or Quotes** – sharing a conversation or quoting someone at the beginning of an article is usually an effective technique that takes the reader straight to the action.
3. Distribute copies of page 147, *Lead Me On*, and instruct students to follow the directions on this page.

## Lead Me On!

The beginning of a news story is called a *lead*. The lead can be a sentence, a paragraph, or even a page long. Usually with a news story, the lead is a sentence in length. A lead should catch the reader's attention and entice him or her to continue reading. Many times, a headline can serve as the lead in a newspaper article. Writers use many different techniques to draw readers into what they have written. Here are a few examples:

- How does it feel when you have lost your best friend? Jenny Morgan knows just how you feel! Jenny lost her dog to cancer last night...
- Gregory Jacobs felt his legs quiver beneath him. He knew he would fall any minute, but the winner of the Junior High Cross Country Team Match pulled himself across the finish line...
- In the dark woods of Southern Indiana, a loud noise awakened all the residents of Bloomington...
- Do you have a soda in your hand? Many American students are getting fatter and fatter. Researchers are showing that school age students are drinking more soda than ever before...

Answer the following questions.

1. Which lead grabs your interest the most? Why?
2. Pick one lead from the list above. Describe how the author attempts to draw you into the news story.
3. What two things do these leads do that you could try in your own writing?
4. Look through a newspaper and look for your favorite lead. Copy it below and describe what you liked about it. Now write a lead for your own newspaper article. Write this newspaper article with more than one lead. Pick the one that you think would be most effective.