

STARTING STRONG: Strategies for First Lines and First Pages for the Non-fiction Writer

➤ **What should the first lines accomplish? Four things:**

Hook the reader

- What types of things grab attention: strange circumstances, bizarre people, surprising statements, controversial positions.

Establish the tone and mood

- serious, lighthearted, conversational, academic, etc.

Inform the reader of the direction you are taking so they know what to expect

- Set the stage: agree or disagree on a position, educate on how to do or accomplish something
- Relate the story of a person, place or thing (such as historic event, groundbreaking technology)

Persuade the reader to keep reading

- Seal the deal! They need to be motivated to invest time for your idea/book.
- What are the benefits of finishing the book?

➤ **The Big Idea**

In presenting your Big Idea decide your approach: a comprehensive overview of an entire subject, or will it be narrow in its focus.

- **Can you condense your Big Idea down into a single sentence?**

As an exercise, write down the central concept of your book in one single sentence, or two at the most. Having a working title will help you focus while you write.

➤ **Strategies for first lines**

- **A simple first sentence that forces a response**

A **declaration** causes you to agree, disagree, be alarmed, laugh, sigh, be inspired, etc...

A **question** results in an immediate response:

- **A more literary approach that forces the reader to re-read the first sentences**
- **A personal story.**

➤ **Do you need an introduction chapter?**

- Introduce the Author
- Tell why?
- Provide background
- Introduce the book's format
- Explain 'how to get the most out of this book'

➤ **Final thoughts:**

- *Your writing style in the introduction should match the rest of the book in tone and mood.*
- *Keep it brief – a couple of pages*
- *Don't rush to include an abundance of statistics.*
- *Stay clear of lengthy descriptions.*
- *Engage the reader!*