

## Starting an Essay or Speech

*(13 ways to effectively capture the attention of your audience)*

1. *Use of a startling statement – use a shocking or surprising fact that pertains to your topic.*  
EX: “While you’re reading this notice, millions of vulnerable people are being ripped off on cars, homes, clothes, jewelry, businesses, and every other type of purchase you can imagine. And it doesn’t stop there!” (How to protect).
2. *Make a comparison – Use a metaphor or simile comparing your topic to something else.*  
EX: My love is a rose – just watch out for the thorns.
3. *Use of a quote – Use a quotation from someone else that pertains to your topic. Check out Bartlett’s Quotations: <http://www.bartleby.com/100/>*  
EX: “Nothing was ever so unfamiliar and startling to a man as his own thoughts.” - Henry David Thoreau
4. *Ask a pertinent question – Begin the thought process of your audience by asking a question or a series of questions.*  
EX: When in a moral dilemma, do we really try to do the “right thing” because it is the right thing to do? Or do we do the “right thing” just to get something in return?
5. *Definition – Define your topic*  
EX: “Usenet is the name given to the computer network which carries newsgroups - newsgroups are arranged in hierarchies based loosely on subject matter - the USENET is often confused with the INTERNET in the news media - started by two students at Duke University.”
6. *Direct general statement*  
EX: “I underwent, during the summer I became fourteen, a profound religious crisis.”--James Baldwin, from “Letter from a Region in My Mind.”
7. *Immediate revelation of purpose*  
EX: Because Americans are so culturally isolated, we need a national policy that supports increased foreign language instruction in elementary and secondary schools.
8. *An appeal to self- interest*  
EX: Never take a low paying job again - guaranteed. Let others make sales for you.
9. *Issue a challenge – Challenge your audience to make a decision about your topic or some aspect of it.*  
EX: We all must share a sense and common commitment to reducing heart disease.
10. *Use of suspense – build suspense by not immediately stating your topic or purpose.*  
EX: Of course she remembered. How could she forget? What was it? No, the wood does not go in the refrigerator. It goes in the closet. Is that right? Can you eat wood?  
“Oh Mom, this isn’t wood it’s a book. It goes on the bookshelf.”  
This is what it is like to live with Alzheimer’s disease.

11. *Use of an illustration – Create a picture in the minds of your audience.*

EX: When I was growing up, one of the places I enjoyed most was the cherry tree in the back yard. Behind the yard was an alley and then more houses. Every summer when the cherries began to ripen, I used to spend hours high in the tree, picking and eating the sweet, sun-warmed cherries. My mother always worried about my falling out of the tree, but I never did. But I had some competition for the cherries — flocks of birds that enjoyed them as much as I did and would perch all over the tree, devouring the fruit whenever I wasn't there. I used to wonder why the grown-ups never ate any of the cherries, but actually when the birds and I had finished, there weren't many left.

12. *Use of an anecdote – Tell a story to introduce your topic.*

EX: It is 3:30 in the afternoon, and twelve-year-old Jan is home alone after school, working on her computer. Only she is not doing her homework or even playing a video game. She is instead chatting and occasionally flirting with a virtual roomful of strangers. [Thesis] The computer revolution makes possible an unprecedented level of private and explicit conversation between children and adults.

13. *Use of personal reference – Tell the audience about yourself or something you have done.*

EX: There was a time in my life when I thought my life was over—over because the doctor told me it was. I was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease and I knew the life I knew would be gone from my memory.