**INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH**

* Students are told from the first time they receive instruction in English composition that their introductory paragraphs should accomplish two tasks:

1. They should get the reader's interest so that he or she will want to read more.
2. They should let the reader know what the writing is going to be about.

* The second task can be accomplished by a carefully crafted [**thesis statement**](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/thesis.htm). Writing thesis statements can be learned rather quickly. The first task — securing the reader's interest — is more difficult.
* First, admit that it is impossible to say or do or write anything that will interest everybody. With that out of the way, the question then becomes: What can a writer do that will secure the interest of a fair sized audience?
* Professional writers who write for magazines and receive pay for their work use five basic patterns to grab a reader's interest:

1. historical review
2. anecdotal
3. surprising statement
4. famous person
5. declarative

* What follows is an explanation of each of these patterns.

1 **Historical review:** Some topics are better understood if a brief historical review of the topic is presented to lead into the discussion of the moment. Such topics might include "a biographical sketch of a war hero," "an upcoming execution of a convicted criminal," or "drugs and the younger generation." Obviously there are many, many more topics that could be introduced by reviewing the history of the topic before the writer gets down to the nitty gritty of his paper. It is important that the historical review be brief so that it does not take over the paper.

2 **Anecdotal:** An anecdote is a little story. Everyone loves to listen to stories. Begin a paper by relating a small story that leads into the topic of your paper. Your story should be a small episode, not a full blown story with characters and plot and setting.

3 **Surprising statement:** A surprising statement is a favorite introductory technique of professional writers. There are many ways a statement can surprise a reader. Sometimes the statement is surprising because it is disgusting. Sometimes it is joyful. Sometimes it is shocking. Sometimes it is surprising because of who said it. It is not used as much as the first two patterns, but it is used.

4 **Famous person:** People like to know what celebrities say and do. Dropping the name of a famous person at the beginning of a paper usually gets the reader's attention. It may be something that person said or something he or she did that can be presented as an interest grabber. You may just mention the famous person's name to get the reader's interest. The famous person may be dead or alive. The famous person may be a good person like the Pope, or he or she may be a bad person like John Wilkes Booth. Of course, bringing up this person's name must be relevant to the topic. Even though the statement or action may not be readily relevant, a clever writer can convince the reader that it is relevant.

5 **Declarative:** This technique is quite commonly used, but it must be carefully used or the writer defeats his whole purpose of using one of these patterns, to get the reader's interest. In this pattern, the writer simply states straight out what the topic of his paper is going to be about. It is