Beginnings and Endings

Beginnings and Endings (Parts 1 and 2)
Start With a Scene
Start With a Surprise!
Make Your Point
Start With a Question
Full Circle Endings
Start With Wordplay
Your Turn
When you write a piece of expository text, pay special attention to your beginning and ending. Like the slices of bread on a sandwich, they hold your writing together!
What do you do when you get hungry? You probably just reach into the refrigerator. But for spotted owls, grabbing a meal is a bit trickier. These birds hunt small rats, mice, and beetles that scurry across the forest floor. To help them hunt this fast-moving prey, spotted owls have some special adaptations, or features.

One feature that helps spotted owls hunt is their supersoft feathers. These feathers help spotted owls fly without making a lot of noise. Prey does not hear the owl until it is too late.

Spotted owls also have excellent vision. It is especially sharp at night, when spotted owls hunt. To look for prey over a large area, these owls can turn their heads 270 degrees. That's almost all the way around!

Finally, spotted owls have huge jaws. This allows them to swoop in and swallow their food whole. Later, they cough up the bones.

Thanks to these features, spotted owls never have much trouble finding their next meal. Rats, mice, and bugs may be fast. But for hungry owls, they are fast food!
Start With a Surprise!

Try starting your essay or report with an interesting or surprising fact. An interesting fact that is new to readers may draw them in and make them want to read more.
Cheetahs can run 70 miles per hour—about as fast as a car on a highway! That’s just one of the characteristics that make cheetahs some of the most amazing animals in the world.

- They live in the open plains of Africa.
- They can run as fast as a car on a highway.
- They have black spots, and their name means “spotted one.”
- They cannot roar, but they do hiss and growl.

TOPIC: Cheetahs

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Start With a Surprise!
Start With a Question

Can you begin an essay or report by asking a question? You bet! It’s a great way to get readers thinking about your topic.
Can you imagine having a theater and a bowling alley right in your own home?  

The White House, where the President and First Family live, has these cool features and more. (Report will be about the White House.)

How would you like to dig for hours under a hot desert sun?  

The answer is not a real person, but instead a creature called the duck-billed platypus. (Report will be about the duck-billed platypus.)

What animal looks like a duck but cannot quack?  

Are you afraid of spiders?  

Many people are. They don’t know that most spiders are harmless. In fact, spiders help people. (Report will be about how spiders help people.)

Start With a Question
TRY IT!

Imagine that you are writing a report about your hometown. What question could you use to grab readers’ attention at the very beginning?
Start With Wordplay

A pun or play on words is another exciting way to start a report, essay, or news story. In fact, newspapers sometimes use puns to create fun headlines. To use a pun, find a word or expression that has multiple meanings.

EXAMPLES:
Local Farmer Makes “Deer” Friends
Oil Spill Fuels Anger
Cats Make Purr-fect Pets
Discuss the example together. Then, click on the right arrow and brainstorm a play on words you might use to start the topic on the next page.

Good News for Gorillas
From Scholastic News 3, November 3, 2008

Gorilla lovers are going ape over great news from the Republic of Congo. Recently, 125,000 western lowland gorillas were discovered in this African nation. Why is it such good news? Over the years, the population, or total number, of western lowland gorillas has been dropping. The main causes are disease and illegal hunting. People fear that these gorillas could die out.

The new discovery does not mean that western lowland gorillas are out of danger. But it is still something to celebrate!

*What does it mean when a person “goes ape” over something?*

*Why is the expression “going ape” perfect for this topic?*
Scientists have made an exciting discovery about bees. The venom in their stingers can help doctors treat several serious illnesses.

Hmm . . . How can I use wordplay to make this sound more fun?

Move the yellow thought balloon for a couple of ideas.
Start With a Scene

Another way to hook readers is to start with an anecdote, or mini-story, that relates to your topic. This helps your reader form a mental picture.
The year was 1927. Under the blazing South Dakota sun, dozens of workers dangled in rope harnesses, facing a massive granite cliff. Some attacked the mountain with pounding jackhammers. Others used chisels to carefully scrape away portions of rock. Ever so slowly, the famous face of America’s first president began to emerge from the mountainside. The creation of Mount Rushmore had begun.
Try It!

Imagine that you are writing an essay on how to make your own birthday piñata. What kind of anecdote could you use to begin your essay?
Make Your Point

Your first paragraph should tell readers exactly what your essay or report will be about. Typically, the last sentence in the first paragraph clearly states the topic. This sentence is called a *thesis statement* or *topic statement*.
The human body has 206 bones! Today, your bones are probably strong and healthy. But it is important to take good care of them. If you don’t, your bones could become weak when you get older. You should protect your bones by getting enough calcium and staying physically active.

The report will be mainly about ________________________________ .
Yellowstone National Park is home to bison, elk, and other unusual wildlife. It has beautiful lakes and hiking trails. However, one of the most amazing sights at Yellowstone is the geyser known as Old Faithful. Old Faithful is a scientific wonder that never fails to draw crowds.

The report will be mainly about ________________________________.
Full Circle Endings

As you conclude your writing, circle back to your beginning. Remind readers of your most important ideas.
Crunch! That's the sound of someone biting into America's favorite fruit: apples. Every year, the average American eats about 46 pounds of these crisp, tasty treats. If you eat your share, then you might think about planting your own apple trees one day. All it takes is six easy steps and a bit of patience. Here's what to do:

1. Make sure you live in the right kind of climate. Apple trees grow best in places where winters are cold.
2. Choose two kinds of apples to plant. When you plant two kinds near one another, they help each other grow. Some varieties, like Granny Smith apples, are tart. Others, like yellow delicious apples, are sweeter. For each variety you choose, save the seeds from several apples and tuck them into a damp, folded paper towel. Put the towel in a plastic bag and store it in the refrigerator.
3. After six weeks, check to see if some of the seeds have germinated, or sprouted. Plant the sprouts in small pots filled with soil. Put the pots on a windowsill and give them plenty of water.
4. When the plants are a few inches tall, plant them outside. Choose a spot that receives a lot of sunlight and loosen the soil with a shovel. Dig two small holes about eight feet apart and plant your seedlings in these spots.
5. When your trees are two feet tall, put a wooden stake in the ground a few inches away from each tree. Use strips of cloth to tie the tree to the stake. This will help the tree grow straight.
6. Take care of your trees by pruning them and picking nearby weeds. After several years, your apple trees will start to bear fruit!
CONCLUSION:
By following these six steps, you can . . .

Then you will be able to . . .
Beginnings and Endings: Your Turn!

Imagine that you are writing an essay about your favorite hobby or sport. Use the tips you have learned to plan a beginning that grabs attention and an ending that circles back to your main idea. Record your ideas on the sandwich graphic organizer.
Beginnings and Endings

The beginning and ending of a report are the two parts readers remember most! In this series of Notebook pages, students learn to craft leads that draw readers in and endings that satisfy them.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

✓ Identify the characteristics of a strong expository beginning.
✓ Write expository leads that use questions, surprising facts, wordplay, and description.
✓ Write a clear thesis statement (or topic statement).
✓ Identify the characteristics of a strong expository ending and apply those characteristics to their own writing.

TIME

About 3–4 class periods for Unit 3 (allow 15–20 minutes per lesson)

MEETING THE STANDARDS

This lesson correlates with the following writing standard for grades 3 through 6:

• Write expository text with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion.
• Establish a central idea in relation to purpose and audience.

GETTING READY

Before students arrive, have your SMART Board ready to go. Open the 3 Beginnings and Endings Notebook file.

The first interactive page, the Beginnings and Endings menu, will appear on your SMART Board. To display the Notebook pages for each of the eight lessons in this unit, click on the button next to the name of the lesson.
Beginnings and Endings (Parts 1 and 2)

1. Display Beginnings and Endings (Part 1) on the SMART Board and read aloud the introduction. Discuss the slices of sandwich bread as a metaphor for the beginning and ending of a piece of expository text. Have students brainstorm what they think the job of the beginning (or lead) is. Repeat for the job of the expository ending.

2. Tell students they will return to the sandwich organizer in a moment, then click on the right arrow to display Beginnings and Endings (Part 2). Read the directions on the pull-out tab. Have a student volunteer read the essay aloud. Then ask a second volunteer to read aloud just the beginning paragraph. Discuss what the writer is trying to do in this paragraph. You might ask: What would the essay sound like without this opening paragraph?

3. Display Parts 1 and 2 on the SMART Board at the same time, using the Dual/Single Page Display tool. As students make observations about the beginning, record their ideas in the sandwich organizer. For example, students may notice that:

- A good beginning grabs readers’ attention.
- A good beginning makes you think, perhaps by asking a question.
- A good beginning helps you connect the topic to yourself. (How do I get a snack when I am hungry?)
- A good beginning gives the main idea for the whole report. It tells what the report will be about.

4. Once the top portion of the organizer is filled, explore the role of a good ending. On Part 2, have a student read aloud the last paragraph of the owl report. Discuss what the ending does for the report, and record students’ ideas in the organizer on Part 1. Observations may include:

- A strong ending repeats the main idea of the piece using different words.
- A strong ending circles back to words or images that were brought up at the beginning (in this case, the ideas of fast prey and finding a meal).
- A strong ending makes readers feel satisfied, like all important questions have been answered.

5. Print out and make copies of the graphic organizer for students’ writing folders to help students remember and apply the characteristics of strong beginnings and endings.

TECH TIP

To access the Dual/Single Page Display tool, go to the toolbar on your SMART Board display and click on the icon that resembles a computer monitor with two pages on it. Now, the two pages should appear on your board side by side.
Start With a Surprise!

1. Display Start With a Surprise! on the SMART Board and explain that this lesson explores one fun way to begin an expository report. An interesting fact that is new to readers may draw them in and make them want to read more.

2. Click on the right arrow and read the directions on the pull-out tab. Tell students that the writer wants to begin a report on cheetahs with a surprising fact. It is up to your students to choose the fact that they think will work best. Invite student volunteers to read aloud each cheetah fact.

3. Read the first fact (They live in the open plains of Africa) and ask students to raise their hands if they think the writer should begin with this fact. Emphasize that students can vote only once.

4. Allow each student who voted for the first fact to approach the SMART Board and use the Creative Pen to place a star on the line after the fact.

5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for the remaining cheetah facts. When you finish, you should have a pictograph with one star representing each student vote. Have students count the stars after each fact and declare a winner.

6. Explain that hidden behind the cheetah pictures at the bottom of the screen are two examples of ways to use a fact as a lead. Both leads use the same fact, but in different ways. Invite a student volunteer to drag aside the first picture and read aloud the lead. Repeat for the second picture. Discuss which example students prefer, and why.

7. Remind students that they might want to try a “fun fact” lead on their next report or essay.

TECH TIP

Did you somehow end up with extra stars all over the page? Get rid of unwanted stars (or other shapes) by clicking back on the plain black arrow. Touch the shape you want to delete and then touch the red X (Delete tool) in your Notebook toolbar. You can also hit the back arrow (Undo tool) as many times as is necessary to clear the unwanted shapes.
Start With a Question

1. Display Start With a Question on the SMART Board and point out to students that this page does, indeed, start with a question! Explain that asking a question to make readers think is a great way to draw readers into a topic. It is a common and effective way to start a report or essay. In this lesson, students will explore some examples.

2. Click on the right arrow and pull on the tab to read the directions. Remind students that lead is another word for beginning. Have a student volunteer choose one of the question leads on the left side of the page and read it aloud. As a class, predict what that report would be about.

3. Have your volunteer drag the question he or she selected over to the crystal ball. As the question slides over the crystal ball, the next sentence or two of the report will be revealed. Have the student read the text inside the crystal ball aloud. Ask: Were we correct in our prediction about the report’s topic?

4. Repeat step 3 for the remaining question leads. Discuss the different kinds of questions the writers used. Some, like the platypus question, are riddle-like. Others, like the spider question, are meant to set up a contrast between what the average reader thinks and what is actually true—a good technique to use when there are common misconceptions about a topic. Still others, like the paleontologist and White House leads, are designed to make readers imagine themselves in a situation.

5. Click the right arrow to go to the next page and read the Try It! prompt. Have students brainstorm questions they could use to begin an essay about their hometown. Have them imagine they are writing a travel brochure for the local chamber of commerce. Examples might include:

- Where can you find both sandy beaches and rugged mountains?
- What is there to do in New City?
- Do you enjoy shopping and dining out?

6. Remind students that they might want to try a question lead on their next report or essay.
Start With Wordplay

1. Display Start With Wordplay on the SMART Board. Read the introduction together and take a minute to talk about some examples of wordplay.

Some puns use words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings.

EXAMPLE: Local Farmer Makes “Deer” Friends
(This article is about how a farmer befriended deer that wandered onto his property.)

Other puns use words that look and sound the same but have different meanings. (Both meanings have to make sense with the topic.)

EXAMPLE: Veterinarians have found a new way to “treat” frightened patients.
(This article talks about a way to give pets medicine in doggy treats. So “treat” is used in two ways.)

You can also play with words by rhyming or using alliteration (repetition of a beginning sound).

EXAMPLE: Move over, Rover. Experts say that by 2023, cats will replace dogs as America’s top pet.

2. Click on the right arrow and review the directions together. Then read aloud the example of wordplay in the gorilla news story. Discuss the literal meaning of ape (a gorilla or other primate) and the figurative meaning of “going ape” (getting very excited).

3. Click on the right arrow and read aloud the text inside the thought bubble. To help students generate plays on words related to bees, first brainstorm a list of words we think of when we think of bees. You can record the words in SMART pen right on the screen. Your list might include words such as hive, buzz, swarm, sting, fly, and honey.

4. Ask students to look at the words and evaluate whether any of them have multiple meanings that would make effective beginnings. Point out that buzz, for example, is often used to mean “news.” Swarm can refer to what bees do or what people do when they are in a large group.

5. Move the yellow thought bubble aside to reveal some examples of wordplay leads that might work for this topic.
6. Remind students to be on the lookout for opportunities to try a wordplay lead on reports and essays. However, point out that this kind of lead can take a long time to master.

**Start With a Scene**

1. Remind students that they have already explored questions, surprising facts, and puns as ways to start expository text. Let them know that the last lead style they will explore in this unit is an *anecdote*, or very short story, that helps readers imagine the topic.

2. Display *Start With a Scene* on the SMART Board and read the introduction. Click on the right arrow and read the directions on the pull-out tab. Help students access the SMART highlighter from the toolbar for the activity. Use a finger to touch the Pen tool and select one of the highlighter colors from the pen menu (highlighter styles are on the far right). Remind students that a finger will now serve as the highlighter.

3. Have a student read aloud the sample anecdote about Mount Rushmore. Explain that students should look for words and phrases that help them form pictures of this scene in their heads. As students identify details that help them form mental pictures, invite volunteers to highlight those details by dragging a finger over the desired words.

4. Click on the right arrow and read the Try It! prompt. Explain that students are to think of an anecdote they could use to begin an essay on making a piñata. If students need scaffolding, ask: *Where and when do people normally use piñatas? Who can help me create a mini-story about that setting?* Students may come up with something like the following:

> Piñatas are a favorite part of every birthday party. Grown-ups hang a colorful papier-mâché container from a tree limb or doorway. Excited party guests know that inside that container is a collection of tiny toys and sweet treats. They take turns swinging a baseball bat at the shape, hoping to smash it open. When the piñata finally breaks, everyone has fun collecting the tiny prizes.

> Did you know that making a piñata can be almost as much fun as smashing one open? Follow these steps to . . .

5. Guide students to understand that to work as an introduction, an anecdote must be short—no more than four or five sentences. It must be obvious how the mini-story relates to the topic of the report or essay.

6. Remind students to experiment with anecdote leads in their own reports and essays.
Make Your Point

1. By now, your students should have a strong grasp of why and how to grab readers’ attention at the beginning of an essay or report. Ask: *Once you have the readers’ attention, what do you want to say next?* Explain that the next step is to give a clear statement of the main idea or topic statement for the report. This statement is usually the last sentence of the first paragraph. It tells the reader what the whole report will be about.

2. Display *Make Your Point* on the SMART Board and read the introduction together. Click on the right arrow to go to the next page, and then read the directions on the pull-out tab. Access the highlighter by touching the Pen tool and selecting the highlighter color of your choice.

3. Read aloud the paragraph about bones and then ask: *Which sentence tells us what the whole report will be about?* Elicit student responses, and discuss why the last sentence (*You should protect your bones. . . .*) is correct. The rest of the report will talk about protecting your bones.

4. Point out to students that this thesis statement uses a technique called *previewing*. It doesn’t just tell us that the report will be about protecting bones; it tells us that the report will talk about two specific ways of protecting bones—getting enough calcium and staying physically active. Let students know that previewing is a great way to keep their essays and reports focused and organized. It is like giving readers a road map to the text!

5. Click on the right arrow and repeat step 3 for the paragraph about Old Faithful. Here, the thesis statement is “Old Faithful is a scientific wonder that never fails to draw crowds.” Guide students to notice that this thesis statement is less specific than the first one. Can they still predict what kinds of details the report will include? Note that the report will probably discuss what makes Old Faithful a scientific wonder and how many people go to see it.

6. Remind students to include clear thesis statements (with or without previewing, according to your preference) in their own pieces of expository writing.

**TECH TIP**

Remember that all digital ink, including pen and highlighter marks, can be erased easily with your SMART eraser. Select the eraser tool, then choose the width that will work best.
Full Circle Endings

1. Display Full Circle Endings on the SMART Board and read the introduction together. Have students recall the characteristics of a good ending that they observed at the beginning of this unit.

2. Click on the right arrow and pull out and read the directions. Read aloud the essay on planting apple trees. Point out that the essay is missing its ending. Click on the right arrow and direct students’ attention to the prompts on the page. Challenge students to use the prompts to brainstorm some effective ways to end the essay. If you want, click on the left arrow to return to the essay. Remind students to look at the beginning paragraph and revisit some of the important ideas there.

3. Have a student volunteer move aside the apple to see one way to wrap up this essay. Discuss how the sample conclusion does the following important things:

   • Reminds readers that there were six easy steps.
   • Reminds readers of the purpose or main idea of the essay (how to plant an apple tree).
   • Circles back to the ideas of “crunching” and “America’s favorite fruit” from the beginning paragraph.

4. Remind students to follow this model and summarize important ideas when they write their own expository endings.
Beginnings and Endings: Your Turn!

1. Print and make copies of Beginnings and Endings: Your Turn! Display the Notebook page on the SMART Board and distribute copies of the worksheet. Explain that students will complete this page on their own, either in class or for homework, to apply what they have learned about expository beginnings and endings. The page calls for students to write about a favorite hobby or sport. However, if students have already begun researching and writing their own reports or essays on other topics, this page is an ideal tool for planning the opening and closing.

2. Review the directions, reminding students to:

   • Plan a lead that grabs attention with a fact, question, wordplay, or anecdote.
   • Follow the lead with a clear thesis statement that tells the main idea of the report.
   • Plan a closing paragraph that circles back to important ideas from the beginning.

3. Once students have completed the activity, have partners share their work and provide feedback to one another.
About the PDF Lesson and Companion Notebook File

This unit includes a Notebook file on expository writing. The Notebook file includes several interactive features that take advantage of the bells and whistles SMART technology has to offer without being overwhelming to the SMART Board novice. You'll find opportunities to use the Creative Pen, on-screen keyboard, graphic organizers, cloning tools, drag-and-drop feature, and much more. Instructions for using each SMART tool are embedded in the lesson plan.

The Notebook file introduces writing skills in a gradual-release format. The first lesson in the unit introduces the topic, engages students' attention, and establishes what they already know. In the next few lessons, students collaboratively explore concrete skills related to the topic. In the last “lesson,” students synthesize and apply what they have learned in a brief independent assignment. You may choose to have students complete this final Your Turn! activity in class or as a homework assignment.

Tech Tips

Although the SMART Expository Writing Notebook file included with the lesson PDF was created using Notebook 10 software, you will be able to use the activities with older versions of the software. If you are still getting the hang of your SMART Board, be sure to look for the technology tips offered at various points throughout the units. However, the following is an overview of the main Notebook features you will be using.

SMART Pens These are the black, red, green, and blue pens that came with your SMART Board. Use them to write directly on the screen in digital ink.

Creative Pens A student favorite, this tool allows you to draw fun lines made of smiley faces, stars, rainbow stripes, and more.

Magic Pen When students circle text or art with the Magic Pen, a spotlight focuses on the circled portion of the page. Everything else on the page goes dark temporarily. It’s a dramatic way to focus attention on one element on a page!

Eraser Like its old-fashioned counterpart, this eraser removes unwanted writing. It will work on text and lines created with the SMART pens. It will not work on typed text or art objects.

On-Screen Keyboard If your students are adding text to a small field or simply prefer typing to writing freehand, use the on-screen keyboard. You can access it by touching the keyboard icon on the front tray of your SMART Board.

Properties Tool In several of the activities in this book, you will be guided to use this feature to change the color or style of a SMART pen or to add color to a box.

Screen Shade A teacher favorite, this tool allows you to cover part of a page while focusing attention on another part. Activate the shade by clicking on the Screen Shade icon on your toolbar. Deactivate it by clicking again. To gradually open a shade that covers your screen, use one of the circular buttons on the shade itself to drag the shade open.