



Attention Getting Devices

Attention getting devices—also known as attention getters—are designed to capture your audience’s attention in the first sentence of your speech. Make sure to select a device that is appropriate for your audience, occasion, and topic.

Common Attention Getting Devices:

1. **Anecdote**—Anecdotes are short stories that illustrate the main points of the speech.
 - A. Personal anecdote—This story describes your personal experience with the topic.
 - B. Historical anecdote—This story describes a historical event.
 - C. Hypothetical example—This device asks your audience to envision a scenario as if it were happening to them. This can be accomplished with a hypothetical situation (“imagine that you are walking through the forest”), or with an anecdote (“imagine that you are Sam, a forest ranger in Alaska”).
2. **Quote**— Quotes that are humorous, insightful, or emotional can add color to an introduction, and boost the credibility to the speaker. Avoid quotes that are irrelevant, inappropriate, unethical, or misleading, and always remember to cite your sources.
3. **Surprising statement**—Surprising statements reveal facts or statistics that would surprise the audience. When used correctly, this device can boost the speaker’s credibility and the audience’s interest in the topic. Make sure to avoid facts or statistics that may not be true, or are published by a questionable source.
4. **Question**—These are questions posed directly to the audience.
 - A. Rhetorical question— Rhetorical questions are designed to make your audience consider your argument, and do not elicit a response.
 - B. Overt-response question— Overt-response questions are questions designed to elicit a response from your audience.
 - I. Polls—These questions poll your audience (“raise your hand if...”).
 - II. Free-response—These questions are less commonly used, but may be appropriate for some contexts. Classroom lectures, for example, frequently use free-response questions as a way to encourage student participation.
5. **Humor**— Humorous introductions can be effective, but they are very difficult to execute effectively. When writing a humorous introduction, make sure that it is appropriate for the situation and the audience, relevant to the topic of the presentation, and flows naturally into the rest of the introduction.



- 6. Reference to audience/occasion**—For significant events or ceremonies, it may be effective to begin your introduction by describing the audience or occasion.
- A. Audience—Referencing the audience is only effective when all audience members share a common identity (“as college students, we are all familiar with...”).
 - B. Occasion—For special occasions—such as weddings, funerals, or award ceremonies—reminding the audience of the meaning behind the event can bring them together and boost your credibility.