

#1: The “Start-in-the-Moment-Then-Zoom-Out” Method

One or two stories conveying a personal anecdote or fictional scene, opening in medias res.

1. Start right in the middle of one of the moments in the writing, in medias res (meaning, “in the middle of things.”), then leave a cliffhanger.
2. State and explain the situation.
3. Explain the significance.

Using one or more of the following:

#2: The Narrative Method

Tell one or two stories, building up to a climactic scene.

1. Set the scene.
 - Where were you?
 - What did it look like, sound like, smell like?
 - How were you feeling?
2. Introduce the situation or conflict.
 - Explain backstory (what do we need to know about the people involved for this to make sense?)
3. What happened?
 - Use dialogue, vivid description.
 - If telling two stories, do 1-3 again!
4. Write a conclusion.
 - Why does this story matter?
 - What did you take away from it?
5. **State the belief** and connect it back to the story.

#3: The Classic “Intro - Body Paragraphs - Conclusion” Method

Unpacking and defending a life philosophy.

1. State belief.
 - What is your belief?
 - What does it mean to you? Is it exactly what it sounds like, or is it a metaphor?
 - Why do you believe this? (Short version, like a thesis statement)

2. How did you start believing this?

Using one or more of the following:

- What was your life like before you started believing this?
- Who helped you form this belief? Tell us about them.
- What changed in your life after you started believing your belief?
Was the change instant, or did it take a while? What did that change feel like?

3. When your belief matters most.

Using one or more of the following:

- Have you ever put your belief into action? Tell what happened.
- Have you ever doubted your belief? Has someone else ever doubted it?
- Have you ever taught your belief to another person?
- How is your belief relevant in current events, history, books or music?

4. Why is this belief important?

- Do you think everyone should believe this? Why or why not?
- What would the world look like if everyone believed this?
- What would the world look like if no one believed this?

5. Re-state belief, and end with a thoughtful concluding sentence (give the reader something to think about).