



THE OPENING

Some writers wait until they have most of their story written before deciding how they want to start it; they need to really get to know the story first. You might already have a good opening for your story, but just in case, now would be a good time to reconsider it before you decide your story is finished.

Here we will look at just four types of openings, but there are lots more out there. To give yourself a better variety of choices, look at other short stories and novels and explore the different ways they start. Also, look through the story you already have written: You might find that there's a section in the middle that you want to move to the beginning.

A Scene

This is how the final version of the story "Frog" begins: right in the middle of a scene between Bree and her parents:

I could tell from the line between my mom's eyes that something was up. She'd just picked up her phone to check a text that had come in, and as she read it, that line appeared.

She exhaled, hard. "Chloe can't come."

A Statement

Another way the story "Frog" could have opened is with a statement like this:

I am totally afraid of frogs. I know it's silly, because they can't hurt you unless they're poisonous, and we don't even have that kind of frog near us. I know some people who just pick them up with their bare hands like it's nothing. Not me. We live near a creek, so we get them in our house a few times a year, and when we do, I always just ask my mom or dad to take care of them.

That wasn't going to be an option this time.

A Summary

“Frog” could have started with the summary of Bree’s history of not getting to stay home alone:

I have always wanted my parents to let me stay at home alone, but they almost never do. I’m *thirteen*. It’s ridiculous. They’ll go to the store for 30 minutes or maybe let me stay home while they have a dentist appointment or something, but otherwise, if they’re going to be gone more than an hour, they have a babysitter come over.

But one night, the babysitter got a stomach virus, and that changed everything.

A Description

Another way “Frog” could have opened is with the description of the frog. It would start by zooming right in on the frog itself, then it would have to back up and explain the events that led up to Bree noticing it in the first place.

At first I thought it was a leaf: the brownish-green, bumpy thing that was lying in the hall when I came out of my room. But I didn’t remember seeing a leaf earlier. When I took a step closer and got a better look, I was sure. He was tiny—no bigger than the little handheld pencil sharpener I kept in my backpack—and there was no doubt about it. He was definitely, definitely a frog.

What to Do Now

- Try some of these opening styles with your own story until you find one that you like best.
- If you want more ideas, look at other stories and see how the authors choose to start them.
- Your opening lines might already be somewhere else in your story; you might just need to move them to the top.