



Back door vs. Front door Approach

For both the reader and the writer, an introduction is an access point to an essay – the way in. This is why the first paragraph is so important. Trimble says, “A good opener gives you momentum, confidence, and an extra incentive to make the remaining paragraphs worthy of the first” Beginning an essay is a tricky process for anyone, even the most advanced writers. It’s always a challenge trying to find your footing and a way in at the same time. We tend to falter at this phase. Therefore, our trepidation leads to soft, clunky, or cliché attempts at entry to the topic of investigation. This is why it is referred to as a back door approach, or, as Trimble calls it, “the long way in.”

Examples of Back Door Approach

- “Webster’s dictionary defines courage as...”

Let’s confess: we’ve all tried this. The problem is, in this context, the dictionary is a useless source, and often cites information that we, as a reader, already know. Additionally, the information offered doesn’t relate to the writer or reader, and it comes across as both fluff and padding, and is obvious in its attempt.

- “In Mark Twain’s epic adventure novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn...*”

Let’s be honest, this offers nothing the reader doesn’t already know. Also, it forces the writer to summarize what is already understood. Lastly, it lacks specifics, is cliché, and makes any attempt at a valid and thorough argument very difficult.

- “One might say that healthcare reform is currently a hot button issue. Those who do would be correct.”

The voice here is all off. It uses passive language, imagining it as a safer approach, rather than assertive and active language. Also, it lacks specificity with regards to pronoun usage. For example, who is “One”?

The approach here is didactic rather than engaging. Who wants to be lectured to in an essay? Not I, you, or your professor.

An example of a Front Door Approach

“My mother has fought every day of her life. She is the bravest woman I know. Since she was five years old, when she lost her hearing while working in a Cambodian factory, to today, as a cancer survivor, she has shown strength and courage under the harshest of circumstances.”

Note the differences between this example and the previous ones. The front door approach communicates the writer’s ideas directly in active language. The ideas



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presented here are don't run the risk of confusing or frustrating the reader with unnecessary verbiage or convoluted structure; most will know almost immediately what is being argued.

Try to convert the back door approaches above to front door approaches that are more direct and engaging.