Boring vs. Interesting Introductions

First, the Boring
(Please try to stay awake during these examples.)

Example: “Members of a family typically interact with one another on a frequent basis from the time children are born into the family unit. In American culture, opportunities are built in for families to communicate during meals, spend time together on family vacations and share milestones together. As members of a family transition through different phases in their lives, the frequency and types of disclosures between parents and children often change.”

Comment: Are you still awake? If so, you may have had these questions: The husband and wife didn’t talk before children came into the marriage? Opportunities to communicate in the family are unique to the American culture? What’s the point of listing meals, vacations, and milestones--how does that relate to the paper? (It doesn’t). Not easy to make generalizations both boring and incorrect, but these are!

Example: “Some people would argue that the ultimate goal in life should be to find someone you want to spend the rest of your life with, fall in love, and get married. In fact, throughout the course of our lives, we will spend time dating various people in an effort to find that one special person, and as we make our ways into and out of these relationships, the question of what attracts us to other people remains a steady query.”

Comment: So, you’re going to be dating throughout the course of your life? And what is a “steady query,” besides an awkward phrase? Why do you need to tell me that people date in order to find a partner…is this obvious information, perhaps?

Example: “Nonverbal and verbal cues are the basis of all communication. These cues are especially important in studying deception and deceptive behavior in a communicator. The detection of deceit has been studied by researchers over the years…”

Comment: Extremely obvious opening that doesn’t deserve saying at all. What if I said, “Men and women are the basis of human reproduction. Men and women are especially important in the study of genetics. Genetics has
been studied by researchers over the years…” You’re asleep already, aren’t you? Overly general statements aren’t worth saying.

Now, the Interesting
(You won’t need coffee, they’re stimulating as written.)

Example: “In 1999, President Bill Clinton was accused of sleeping with a former White House intern named Monica Lewinski. Seven months later he admitted that he gave “false impressions” about what had actually occurred between the two (Henan 2005). Had he not admitted to his wrong doings would we have ever known he was lying to the whole country? In order to answer this question, researchers studied the tapes of Bill Clinton’s testimony and found many verbal and nonverbal cues of lying. For example, he frequently shrugged his shoulders and touched his nose. There was also a great increase in speech errors and the use of verbal qualifiers and expanded contractions (such as “you are” instead of “you’re)…”

Comment: Notice how quickly the author gets into interesting and useful information that sets up her topic of deception. And she uses an interesting story (the president’s actions) as her introductory example. Nice job.

Example: “It’s a Tuesday morning on the 110 Freeway. An unpredictable stop in front of me, a loud “Boom!” behind, and I look in the rear-view mirror to see a middle finger being wagged at me. Both of us pull over to the shoulder… “Do you KNOW how to DRIVE?” the other driver shrieks as she gets out of her car…then she looks at me and notices I have a USC sweatshirt on. “Are you a SC student?” she asks. “Yes,” I reply. “Really! I work there. Hey, are you OK? Come here, I’m afraid you will get hit by the moving traffic…”

Comment: This was the setup for a paper on similarity & communication. I guess the author saw no need to bore the professor with a dull, abstract introduction, full of platitudes and obvious statements!

Example: “With the job market flooded with people looking for employment, making the right impression during an interview is more important than ever. Armed with carefully crafted resumes, applicants eagerly present their paper credentials to interviewers hoping that their unique qualifications will set them apart from others. Research has shown, however, that paper credentials make up only one of several important
aspects of the interview process. The strongest predictor of the interviewer’s evaluations and recommendations is the interviewer’s subjective impressions of the applicant’s interview performance (Stevens & Kristof, 1995) and the most significant part of this subjective impression is the applicant’s appearance (Courtney, 1999)....”

**Comment:** This is a good intro with a fast start. The authors get right to the point of their paper and start citing important research within the first paragraph. Further, this intro gives useful information. The statement is interesting because you’d think qualifications and resumes were extremely important, when the research shows it’s the applicant’s appearance that makes the biggest impact. All in the first paragraph! Now that’s getting some bang for the buck. Good job.

**Remember your writing professor’s advice:**

“Start writing your paper, and then go back and throw away your introductory paragraph…it’s probably not worth keeping.”