**Seven kinds of essay hooks**

**The bottom line:**

* Don’t be overly general (NO: “throughout time,” “in today’s society,” “man has always”). Don’t be mechanical (“in this essay I will write about”).

*Instead, try one of these:*

**1. Open with words of advice**

Example: "When you want something from someone, give them something instead."

Example: “If we want peace, we must stop investing so much in war.”

**2. Tell a quick story**  
Example: “When I was a young boy, my father worked at a coal mine. For 27 years, he made it his occupation to scrape and claw and grunt his way into the bowels of the earth, searching for fuel. On April 19, 2004, the bowels of the earth clawed back.” Example: "As a child I was deathly afraid of water, so naturally I joined the swim team."

Example: "As a teen, Bill Gates use to go dumpster diving at his workplace, seeking information; that's how he got his hands on some impressive source codes."

**3. Set a Scene**

Example: “The day of his birth began with Hurricane Charlie pounding at our door in Charleston, South Carolina.”  
Example: “Deciding to attend Bellarmine Academy, a private school, was one of my most difficult decisions.”

**3. Present an intriguing contradiction**

Example: "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

Example: “They were in solitary confinement, yet they organized an action that included over 16,000 prisoners.”

**4. Counter a common assumption**

Example: Many people think the men and women in prison are monsters, people who must be locked up for long sentences to keep the rest of us safe. However, felons are full of remorse and want nothing more than an opportunity to have a different life.

**5. Open with a dilemma**

Example: "The doctors gave me a choice; without health insurance, they would reattach both fingers for $60,000 or just my index finger for $12,000."

Example: “Unstable homes and violent neighborhoods are primary causes of juvenile crime, yet kids are sent back to those same environments after detention because parents have a sacred right to keep their children. What can be done?”

**6. Reveal a startling fact**

Example: "One fast food meal contains all the calories you need in a day."

Example: According to the European Cockpit Association, "Forty-three percent of pilots admit to involuntarily falling asleep during a flight."

**7. Give an inspirational quote that’s relevant to your topic**

Example: "Ghandi famously said, 'Be the change you wish you see in the world.'"

Example: Remember the words of Nelson Mandela: “In my country we go to prison first and then become President,” proof, if we needed it, that prison inmates are not all the worthless sociopaths depicted in movies.