

ESSAY BASICS

GOOD ADVICE:

Before the “Essay Basics,” here is some general good advice on writing:

Write What You Know:

- write what you are passionate about
- what matters to you
- what concerns you & other people

Avoid the Obvious:

- something new, fresh, different
- a new look, perspective

GOOD ADVICE:

Say Something of Value:

- reveal some Truth
- remind of important truth or value

Utilize Evidence:

- the more the better
- “if you talk the talk, then walk the walk”
- *reasons, facts, stats, details, examples*
- **BE SPECIFIC**

ESSAY BASICS:

I. PREWRITING

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- **A. Brainstorming**
- **B. Freewriting**
- **C. Outlining: Preliminary & Formal Outlines**
- **D. Other Prewriting Techniques**

A. Brainstorming

- **One** topic at a time
- Time yourself: **2** minutes
- Write or type
 - (whichever is more natural for you)

A. Brainstorming

- **Then, on a blank screen or sheet of paper**
- **Place as many ideas on your topic as you can think of within the two minutes.**
 - **Do not stop to edit or assess**
 - **simply put down whatever comes to your mind**
 - **Also, do not worry about form**
 - **write words, phrases, or clauses**
 - **however the idea comes to you**

A. Brainstorming

- **At the end of the two minutes, stop typing or put down your pencil/pen and walk away.**
- **When you return refreshed, look over what you have written.**
- **Some ideas will be gems and others will be stinkers--so what?!**
- **Physically cross out the ones you will not use, put a (?) by any that have possibility, and put a (*) by those that have merit.**

B. Freewriting

- ***Similar* to Brainstorming**
 - **Time limit**
 - (here, 5-10 minutes)
 - **Just write, don't think**
 - **No editing**, revising, proofing while writing
- ***Different* from Brainstorming**
 - **paragraph format**
 - sentences, paragraphs
 - looks like an essay
 - whereas BS is list format, looks like an outline

B. Freewriting

- For **5-10** minutes, put pen to paper
 - no stopping, no pondering, no thinking
 - the pen should not leave the paper
 - or your fingers the keyboard for the 10 minutes
- Whatever pops in your head, go with it
 - do not worry about spelling, fragments, or any other error type
- Stop & walk away. Return refreshed.
- Then separate the diamonds from the rough.

C. Outlining

(1) Preliminary Outline:

- focuses writer's attention on logic of paper
- allows writer feedback from instructor & classmates
- allows writer to see if ideas are arranged in sequence
- will change by end of process
- lists main points

C. Outlining

(2) Formal Outline:

- goes beyond listing main points
 - (major & minor points of paper)
- illustrates the structure of the paper
- gives reader clear understanding of the subject
- includes *thesis statement*
- consists of each part of paper with subdivisions & details
- handed in with final paper

D. Other Prewriting Techniques

- **Directed Questioning**
- **Blocking**
- **Clustering, Diagramming, Mapping (Bubbles)**
- **Casual Conversation with friend, tutor, teacher**

ESSAY BASICS:

II. FONTS and HEADERS

II. Font and Headers

FONT:

- **STYLE**
 - = **TIMES NEW ROMAN**
- **SIZE**
 - = **12"**
- **Word 2007, 2010 have changed these defaults**
- **Change them back to this: TNR, 12"**

II. Font and Headers

HEADERS:

- **PAGE #1**
 - **No cover/title page**
 - Instead, in the upper *right*-hand corner
 - *Single*-spaced
 - **Type**
 - **Your Name**
 - **Dr. Housenick**
 - **Course *and* Section** (number or letter)
 - **Due Date**
 - **Assignment Name** (this is not a title)

II. Font and Headers

HEADERS:

- PAGE #2+
 - Do *not* repeat the p#1 header
 - Instead, in the upper *right*-hand corner
 - *Single*-spaced
 - Type
 - *Your Last Name*
 - *hyphen*
 - *Page number* (just the *numeral*, no “p” or “pg”)
 - For ex: **Schmigliesa-4**

II. Font and Headers

- While other teachers may want different fonts and headers,
- I require these
 - TNR
 - 12”
 - Page #1 header (upper *right*-hand corner)
 - Page #2 headers (upper *right*-hand corner)

ESSAY BASICS:

III. TITLES

III. TITLE:

- ❖ **Identify the Subject(s)**
- ❖ **Identify the Rhetorical Strategy**

III. TITLE:

- is *informative, clear, specific, concise*
 - points to thesis
 - suggests or states the point of essay
 - gives readers an idea of the paper's concerns
 - catches readers' attention
 - stirs thought and curiosity
 - is not too long or too short
- can include part of the thesis statement

III. TITLE:

- does NOT rename the assignment
- does NOT use boring/simple titles
 - “School & Work”
- does NOT strain for an effect
 - “Suppose You Were a Toe” —
 - don’t be too cute
- uses NO *cute, amusing, ambiguous titles*

III. TITLE:

- **The Causes and Effects of Teen Smoking**
- **College Is Like a Rite of Passage**
- **Abortion: Two Sides to the Debate**
- **Should the Death Penalty Be Supported or Revoked?**
- **The Elements of Argument Found in The Great Debaters**

TOPIC + MAIN IDEA

III. TITLE:

- **TITLE FORMAT:**

- ***Centered* beneath the header**
- ***Single-Spaced***
 - as the header
- ***Not Bold-Faced***
- ***Not Italicized***
- ***Not Underlined***
 - Unless it contains a title that must be
- ***Not enclosed with Quotation Marks***
 - Unless it contains a title that must use them

ESSAY BASICS:

IV. INTRODUCTIONS

IV. INTRODUCTION:

- 1st paragraph
- *single* paragraph
 - don't unnecessarily delay the start of your paper
 - merely introduce your topic
 - a long paragraph – no more than a page
- grab the readers' attention
- get them to read on

IV. INTRODUCTION:

- relate to them, empathize, 1st person POV
- appropriately use Logos, Pathos, Ethos
- be honest, have honest intentions; this is not about you
- ***proofread!**
 - good grammar & punctuation throughout helps your credibility
- create a sense of your audience
 - usually your classmates & teachers

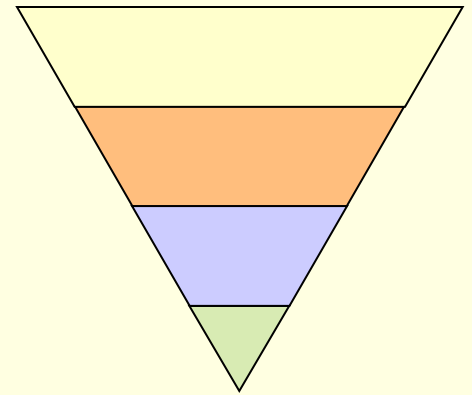
IV. INTRODUCTION:

- **NO** rhetorical questions, **NO** “you”
- **NO** single-sentence Introduction
- **NO** wandering, empty Introduction
 - remain focused and coherent
 - assume the reader does **NOT** know the title or the assignment
 - no references to “the assignment”
- **NO** announcing:
 - In this essay I will
 - I’m going to
 - This essay will

IV. INTRODUCTION:

FUNNEL EFFECT:

- **start out wide**
 - *grab their attention with a*
 - **Generalization****
 - Question
 - **Quote***
 - Quip
 - **Stat***
- **then narrow**
 - *by narrowing the subject to your topic*
 - telling relevant anecdote, explanation, history
- **to your thesis statement**
 - *the last sentence in the paragraph*



IV. INTRODUCTION:

THESIS STATEMENT

TOPIC + MAIN IDEA + SUPPORT

- TOPIC =
 - The focus of the paper
 - The “What”
- MAIN IDEA =
 - The angle, the approach, towards the topic
 - The point of view
 - “So What?!”
- SUPPORT =
 - Evidence, proof, grounds
 - The “How”

IV. INTRODUCTION:

THESIS STATEMENT

Thesis =

- ***one* sentence, clearly worded**
- **comes at the *end of the Introduction***
 - **Deduction**
- ***repeated* throughout the essay**
 - **in Topic Sentences of Body paragraphs**
- **announces at the start what the paper will illustrate**
- **serves as a *guide* for readers**
- ***argumentative***
 - **(right/wrong, for/against)**
 - **an opinion supported by evidence**
 - **an arguable proposition/position that can be supported with evidence**

IV. INTRODUCTION:

THESIS STATEMENT

- **NO Loaded Language**
- **NOT a statement of your personal preferences**
- **avoid obvious positions/arguments**
 - (racism/sexism/ageism=wrong, no duh!)
 - approach from new angle/point of view,
 - think about the topic in a different way
- ***do NOT announce, hedge, or apologize**
 - “in this essay I will,” “this essay will,”
 - no maybe’s, probably’s

- **write *after research* is performed**
- **stay within the limits of the assignment –**
- **choose narrow topics that needn’t be fully explored in books**

ESSAY BASICS:

V. BODY

V. BODY:

*ORDER:

- ***emphatic order*** *
 - save the “best” for last
 - the most important, significant, common,...
- avoid imposing order on data
 - *sometimes* you can see what organizational strategy works best with your material
- ***Other Side*** = first
 - **Rogierian Method**
 - Makes you appear reasonable, well-informed, unbiased → Good Ethos

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

- discuss 1 idea per paragraph
- that 1 idea = clearly presented

1. NAME

2. EXPLAIN

3. ILLUSTRATE

4. REITERATE

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

- (1) Topic Sentences
 - “**NAME**” the point, reason, cause, effect discussed in the paragraph
 - what the paragraph is about
 - what’s here
 - what’s its function in paper
 - Repeat 2/3 of your thesis statement
 - Topic + main idea + support #1
 - *One cause of teen smoking involves peer pressure.*
 - *Another resemblance between gambling addiction and love concerns recidivism.*
 - *The deadliest effect of obesity is a heart attack.*

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

- (2) Clarifying Sentence
 - “**EXPLAIN**” the point mentioned in the Topic Sentence
 - a *brief* rewording of the Topic Sentence (one sentence or two)
 - “*In other words*” or “*That is to say*”

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

■ (3) Support

- “**ILLUSTRATE**” the point, reason, cause, effect
- ample data that illustrate your point
 - *facts, stats, quotes, reasons, anecdotes, expert testimony, examples, instances,...*
- clearly, logically, & efficiently organized

❖ This is, indeed, the most significant (and longest) part of the paragraph.

- Move *from* the abstract *to* the concrete.
- Deduction
- Back up your “talk” with the “walk”

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

- **(4) Warrant Statements**
 - “**REITERATE**” the paragraph’s point, claim, cause, effect,...
 - restate the Topic Sentence (*not* verbatim)
 - Also called, “Clincher Sent.” or “Warrant St.”
 - “**WARRANT**” or justify the example
 - relate the illustration to the paragraph’s main point
 - *Thus, as Smith’s example clearly demonstrates, smoking’s most serious effect is death.*
 - *Therefore, opponents of embryonic stem cell research often cite such statistics as the above to argue their point.*
 - *Thus, therefore, hence*

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

■ **“BOOKENDS”**

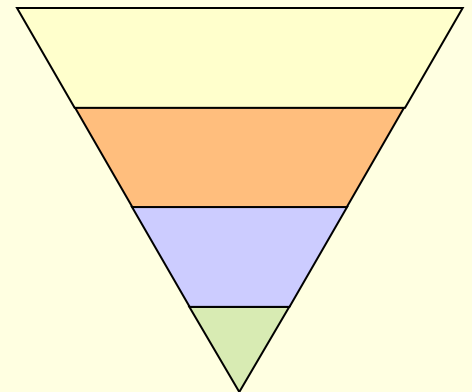
- To make an analogy, the Topic Sentence (1) and the Clincher Sentence (4) serve as *bookends* for the paragraph
- Starting it & ending it
- Holding it together
- Making it one complete, autonomous whole



V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

- As you can see, paragraphs are organized quite specifically
 - *Deductively*, as the Introduction
 - *From the general to the specific*
 - *From the general statement of the topic*
 - *To the specific proof*



V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

- Also, you may have noticed that their organization is quite similar to the organization of the overall essay.
 - Microcosm = Macrocosm
 - (1) An introductory part
 - (2) A specific part for proof
 - (3) A concluding part that links to, reiterates the introductory part, bringing the essay and the paragraph full circle



V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

■ Transitions

- transitional expressions & conjunctive adverbs
 - *thus, for example, additionally, on the other hand*
 - *however, furthermore, moreover*
- between sentences:
 - links ideas, builds coherence, enumerates points
- between paragraphs:
 - links what came before to what's to come

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

- Objectivity

- **present* data without evaluating it
- wait for the Conclusion
 - explain it, if you must, in your own words
 - BUT wait until the Conclusion to draw any conclusions
 - present both sides of an issue (or any data) *fully, fairly, and objectively*

V. BODY:

*VOICE/TONE:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ concise▪ objective▪ logos, pathos, ethos▪ good grammar▪ no slang▪ “I” (1st person POV)▪ the “Polite You” | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ unity<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ stay on subject▪ support<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ as many references as needed to establish thesis▪ tone<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>not</i> condescending, indifferent, flippant |
|---|--|

ESSAY BASICS:

VI. CONCLUSION

VI. CONCLUSION:



BRING the ESSAY FULL CIRCLE

VI. CONCLUSION:

- PURPOSE:

- To bring the essay **full circle**.
- To stress the **importance or relevance** of your thesis and findings -- to reflect your purpose:
(**SO WHAT?!**)
- To give the essay a sense of **completeness or finality**.
- To leave the reader with a **final impression**:
*This is your *last chance* to convince or persuade the reader, so make the most of it!

VI. CONCLUSION:

- REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT:
 - repeat your purpose
 - repeat your thesis
 - moral, lessons
 - point, argument
 - Dominant Impression
 - repeat your main ideas (support, proof)
 - examples, details, points,
 - arguments, traits
 - key points

NOT WORD FOR WORD

VI. CONCLUSION:

- **DRAW a “CONCLUSION”:**
 - **reflect on the implications or importance of your findings**
 - ***the whole point of writing the paper**
 - **the climax**
 - **all the evidence leads to this**
 - ***for *evaluating* evidence**
 - **what does the evidence show/mean**

VI. CONCLUSION:

- **DRAW a “CONCLUSION”:**
 - **Deductions**
 - **Conclusions**
 - **Recommendations**
 - **Analyses**
 - **Inferences**
 - **The outcome of the evidence/data**

VI. CONCLUSION:

- **DRAW a “CONCLUSION”:**
 - **evaluate the strengths & weaknesses in the arguments**
 - **offer a 3rd side to the issue**
 - **answer your research question**
 - **discuss in full the lessons learned**
 - **suggest future papers or research**
 - **pose rhetorical questions**
 - **refer back to the purpose and/or scenario mentioned in your Introduction**

VI. CONCLUSION:

- AVOID:
 - 1-sentence conclusions
 - merely summarizing points
 - “in conclusion”

VI. CONCLUSION:

- *end with* a call to action
- *end with* a solution (to the problem) or a recommendation
- *end with* a vivid image or picture
- *end with* a quotation, a question, a prediction
- *end with* a hook (something memorable)
- *end with* a “**Clincher Sentence**”



VI. CONCLUSION:

- Clincher Sentences:
 - aphoristically summarize the main point
 - they signal that the essay is finished
 - they give a sense of closure
 - they suggest future essay topics
 - they refer to your main point
 - bring the essay full-circle
 - they can refer back to something in your Introduction
 - your opening scenario, your purpose

VI. CONCLUSION:

- **Clincher Sentences:**
 - **Avoid the empty cliché.**
 - **Wrap it all up.**
 - ***Relate to your point***
 - **For example, if you wrote a process paper on making a PB&J sandwich, end by saying that you are now hungry for one.**
 - **If you wrote about your favorite band, end by waiting impatiently for their next disc or their next concert.**
 - **If you wrote that your car is a Junker, end optimistically by looking forward to the day when you can afford a new car or the car of your dreams.**

ESSAY BASICS:

VII. WORKS CITED

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- ***only* those sources actually used in the paper**
 - conversely, a “**Works Consulted**” page lists *all* the works you have read for the project
- **never include anything that you have not read or used**
- **bibliography should match the paper**

VII. WORKS CITED:

- **MLA style**
 - *not* APA, Chicago, or others
 - follow our MLA 2010 site
 - follow the text book, the handbook, the OWL Web site, my handouts
 - perfectly!
 - alphabetical listing
 - reverse indentation
 - include all database information

ESSAY BASICS:

END