

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
 - o (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*

o Time limit

- (here, 5-10 minutes)

o Just write, don't think

- **No editing**, revising, proofing while writing

❖ *Different from Brainstorming*

o 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
 - o no stopping, no pondering, no thinking
 - o the pen should not leave the paper
 - o or your fingers the keyboard for the 10 minutes
- ❖ Whatever pops in your head, go with it
 - o 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
 - o (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

o = **TIMES NEW ROMAN**

❖ SIZE

o = **12"**

❖ Word 2007, 2010 have changed these defaults

❖ Change them back to this: **TNR, 12"**

II. Font and Headers

HEADERS:

❖ PAGE #1

- o No cover/title page
- o Instead, in the upper *right*-hand corner
- o *Single*-spaced
- o 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+

- o Do *not* repeat the p#1 header
- o Instead, in the upper *right*-hand corner
- o *Single*-spaced
- o 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
 - o TNR
 - o 12"
 - o Page #1 header (upper *right*-hand corner)
 - o 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*
 - o points to thesis
 - o suggests or states the point of essay
 - o gives readers an idea of the paper's concerns
 - o catches readers' attention
 - o stirs thought and curiosity
 - o 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 Triple-A Baseball
- ❖ 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:

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

ESSAY BASICS:
IV. INTRODUCTIONS

IV. INTRODUCTION:

- ❖ 1st paragraph
- ❖ *single* paragraph
 - o don't unnecessarily delay the start of your paper
 - o merely introduce your topic
 - o 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

o *grab their attention with a*

- **Generalization****
- Question
- **Quote*** (cite!)
- Quip
- **Stat*** (cite!)

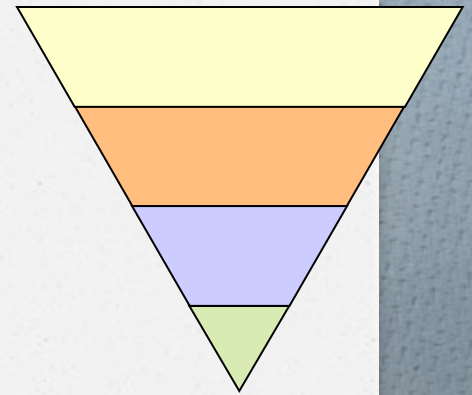
❖ then narrow

o *by narrowing the subject to your topic*

- telling relevant anecdote, explanation, history

❖ to your thesis statement

o *the last sentence in the paragraph*



IV. INTRODUCTION:

TOPIC + MAIN IDEA + SUPPORT

❖ TOPIC =

- o The focus of the paper
- o The “What”

❖ MAIN IDEA =

- o The angle, the approach, towards the topic
- o The point of view
- o “So What?!”

❖ SUPPORT =

- o Evidence, proof, grounds
- o 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* **

- o save the “best” for last
- o the most important, significant, common,...

❖ *ROGERIAN METHOD*

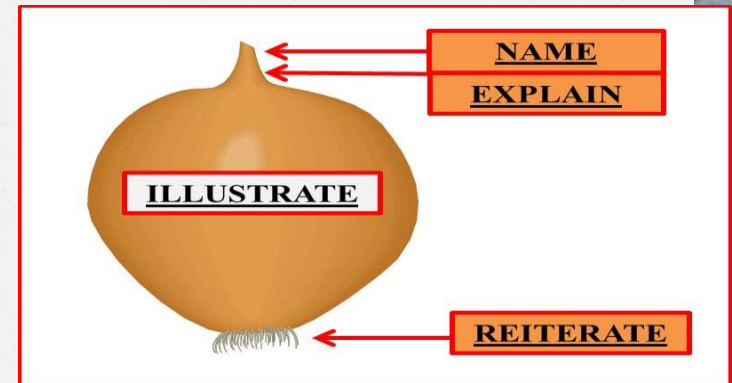
- o *Opposing Side* = first
- o Makes you appear reasonable, well-informed, unbiased
→ Good Ethos

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

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

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

❖ (3) Support

- o “ILLUSTRATE” the point, reason, cause, effect
- o ample data that illustrate your point
 - *facts, stats, quotes, reasons, anecdotes, expert testimony, examples, instances,...*
- o 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 such cite such statistics as the above to argue their point.*
- **Thus, therefore, hence**

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

❖ “BOOKENDS”

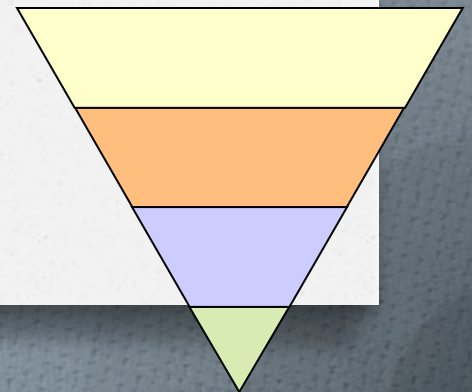
- To make an analogy, the Topic Sentence (1) and the Clincher Sentence (4) serve as *bookends* for the paragraph
- Starting it & ending it
- Holding it together
- Making it one complete, autonomous whole



V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

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



V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

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



V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

❖ Transitions

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

V. BODY:

*PARAGRAPHS:

o Objectivity

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

V. BODY:

*VOICE/TONE:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ be concise▪ remain objective▪ mind logos, pathos, ethos▪ proofread for grammar▪ omit slang▪ 1st person POV:<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ personal anecdotes▪ 3rd person POV▪ avoid 2nd person POV:<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ no “you” | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <u>unity</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">■ stay on subject▪ <u>support</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">■ as many references as needed to establish thesis▪ <u>tone</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>not</i> condescending■ <i>not</i> indifferent, flippant■ <i>not</i> sarcastic |
|--|---|

ESSAY BASICS:
VI. CONCLUSION

VI. CONCLUSION:



BRING the ESSAY FULL CIRCLE

VI. CONCLUSION:

❖ PURPOSE:

- o To bring the essay **full circle**.
- o To stress the **importance or relevance** of your thesis and findings – to reflect your purpose:

SO WHAT?!

VI. CONCLUSION:

o PURPOSE:

- o To give the essay a sense of
 - o completeness or
 - o finality.
- o 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:

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

NOT WORD FOR WORD

VI. CONCLUSION:

o DRAW a “CONCLUSION”:

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

VI. CONCLUSION:

❖ DRAW a “CONCLUSION”:

- o Deductions
- o Conclusions
- o Recommendations
- o Analyses
- o Inferences
- o The outcome of the evidence/data

VI. CONCLUSION:

❖ DRAW a “CONCLUSION”:

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

VI. CONCLUSION:

❖ AVOID:

- o 1-sentence conclusions
- o merely summarizing points
- o “in conclusion”

MINIMUM

5 sentences

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:

- o aphoristically summarize the main point
- o they signal that the essay is finished
- o they give a sense of closure
- o they suggest future essay topics
- o they refer to your main point
- o bring the essay full-circle
- o 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

VII. WORKS CITED:

- ❖ a WORKS CITED page
 - o contains *only* those sources
 - o *actually used* in the paper
- ❖ conversely, a WORKS CONSULTED page
 - o lists *all* the works you *have read*
 - o for the project
 - a Reference or Bibliography
- ❖ *never* include anything that you haven't read
- ❖ *never* forget something you have cited

VII. WORKS CITED:

❖ **MLA style**

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

ESSAY BASICS:
THE END