

The Ultimate Essay Writing Tips Packet

Everything from brainstorming and outlines to topic sentences and citing rules

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Basic Essay Outline

I. Introduction

- a. 1 of 4 introduction strategies
- b. Thesis statement

II. Biographical / Background Information (use only when requested by your teacher)

III. Body Analysis 1 (Repeat a-c as needed to discuss this section)

- a. Topic Sentence
- b. Argument / Details
 - i. Quote / Textual evidence to support your argument
 - ii. Explain quote (how does it relate to your argument?)
- c. Transition Sentence

IV. Body Analysis 2

- a. Topic Sentence
- b. Argument / Details
 - i. Quote / Textual evidence to support your argument
 - ii. Explain quote (how does it relate to your argument?)
- c. Transition Sentence

V. Body Analysis 3

- a. Topic Sentence
- b. Argument / Details
 - i. Quote / Textual evidence to support your argument
 - ii. Explain quote (how does it relate to your argument?)
- c. Transition Sentence

VI. Conclusion

- a. 1 of 4 Conclusion strategies
- b. Restate thesis statement

Four Effective Introduction Strategies

1. Funnel Opener – Only a paragraph. Easy, but not too effective. Start with a general statement and gradually get more specific. Good for any subject, but very short.
 - a. There are many authors that have written novels about wars. Elie Wiesel, Tim O’Brien, and Kurt Vonnegut were among the many. Of these authors, Kurt Vonnegut is the most prolific. This essay will analyze...
2. Narrative Opener – Half to a full page. Good for any subject. You would tell a brief anecdote or story relating to your thesis statement.
 - a. If your essay is on the Holocaust, you can write a narrative opener about someone being taken away to a concentration camp and lead into your thesis.
3. Quote and Commentary – Paragraph to a half page. Good for humanities papers. Choose a quote that relates to what you are writing about, explicate, and explain why you chose it. Relate it back to your thesis statement. Format it like this:

Title of Your Paper

“I have seen the greatest minds of my generation...”

-Allen Ginsberg
4. Baiting your reader – Half to a full page. Embed clues of what the essay could be about without directly saying it until the thesis. A non-direct narrative.
 - a. Imagine a world where no one speaks with each other face to face. The only mode of communication is through tiny devices glued to the hips of a technology influenced generation. This essay will analyze issues relating to smart phones...

Thesis Statements and Topic Sentences

Although scary at first, thesis statements are nothing more than a simple equation:

audience + purpose + 2-3 creative angles = thesis statement

Audience: Who you're writing for

Purpose: Why you're writing (an action verb)

Creative Angles: What are your points / support?

example: Teachers use positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement in order to create a more suitable learning environment for all students.

Your *Topic Sentences* are structured the same way, but with only one creative angle.

example: By using positive reinforcement in the classroom, teachers motivate students to involve themselves in good behavior.

There is also another option that does not include an audience. If you use this explicit thesis statement template, YOU MUST rewrite the statement so that it is implicit. This thesis statement is for basic research papers.

This essay will analyze issues related to _____(topic)_____. It will focus on the following areas of discourse: _____(angle 1)_____, _____(angle 2)_____, and _____(angle 3)_____ to gain a more thorough understanding of this topic.

example: This essay will analyze issues related to influencing student behavior in the classroom. It will focus on the following areas of discourse: positive and negative reinforcement to gain a more thorough understanding of this topic.

Tips to Remember about Thesis Statements:

1. They say what your WHOLE paper will be about. Think of it like a roadmap.
2. Rarely the first sentence of your paper.
3. Always a declarative statement – do not second guess yourself in a thesis.

Summarizing Stories

Summary: Distillation (boiling down to the main points). It should be coherent and concise. So, you should be able to say what it is both shortly and clearly.

Start with a general statement, then the setting, principle characters, and finally plot.

1. General Statement: On the surface, ___(author's name)___'s, “___(title of work)___” is nothing more than a story about _____.
 - a. On the surface, George Orwell's, "A Hanging" is nothing more than a story about controversy when a man has to take another's life.
2. Setting: The story takes place ____(where)___, when ____(when)___.
 - a. The story takes place in Burma, at 8 AM in the late 19th – early 20th century.
3. Characters: The principle characters include: ____(name)___, who is ___what happens___, ____(name)___, who is ___(what happens), etc...
 - a. The principle characters include: the narrator, who is Orwell, the prisoner, who is hanged, the prison superintendent, who pours whiskey out at the end, and a dog, who interrupts the procession.
4. Plot: The story begins when _____(1)_____, _____, _____, _____.
 - a. The story begins when a condemned man is led from his cell. As he is led to the gallows, a dog leapt out. The man avoids a puddle, arrives at the gallows, and is hanged. The guards and superintendent have drinks and tell jokes while the hanged man is still dangling.

Four Effective Conclusion Strategies

1. In Conclusion... / Rephrasing the Thesis – Paraphrase yourself.
 - a. Use this with the funnel opener.
2. Complete the Narrative – Bring your story back. No thesis – just close out the story.
 - a. Use this only for the narrative opener.
3. Clincher – Leave the reader with an evocative quote. Fold it into what you are closing out with.
 - a. **MAKE SURE YOU CITE THE QUOTE USING IN TEXT CITATION.**
4. Evocative Image – Leave a powerful or lasting image.
 - a. Use this for anything **EXCEPT** the narrative opener.

How to Cover Yourself 101

Plagiarism can be deliberate OR accidental.

When you use someone else's WORDS or IDEAS, cite it.

Rule of Common Knowledge: 3 sources have it if the information is easily understood and accepted by those who are not deemed expert in a specific field of study. Anything in an encyclopedia is considered common knowledge.

Direct Quote: Small body of information. Single sentence to full paragraph. Put in quotes AS WRITTEN. Use [brackets] to add to the quote ie) walk[ing]. Use ellipsis (...) to cut out what you don't need to show.

Paraphrase: Medium body of information.

Summarize: Large body of information. Whole chapter/journal.

1. Read for comprehension.
2. Highlight key points.
3. Write to condense, using 100% your own words.

INTEGRATE the quotes/sources in. Demonstrate research. Vary how you integrate research.

Attributor: Short phrase before a summary or paraphrase. Identifies the title and author's name.

Abbreviated attributor: include authors name prior to the quote. Example: "John Smith goes on to say, ".....," so and so continues to say, "....."

You still need to cite while paraphrasing, summarizing, and using an attributor

Word Choice to Avoid

1. Slang – Colloquialisms, idiomatic phrases, street talk. Slang has a short shelf life and loses its meaning frequently.
2. Cliché – Trite or hackneyed or banal. Unoriginal phrase. Lazy writing. Only use quotations when quoting, not to emphasize. To emphasize, use italics or bold.
3. Pretentious word choice – Don't use a thesaurus and try to find big kid words. They will tend to stick out from your usual vocabulary. It is okay to use a thesaurus when you cannot think of a word, but not to sound more collegiate.
4. Wordiness – We all know getting to that word count or page count is difficult but throwing in unnecessary words is not the way to go. Keep things concise.

Steps to an Effective Revision

1. Proofread – Read out of context (backwards).
 - a. Start with the last sentence and go through the paper backwards without reading the sentences around it.
2. Editing – Edit line by line.
 - a. Closely examine your grammar – does everything look right?
3. Revising – Make sure what you are trying to say is clear/concise. Read through your entire paper to make sure your corrections are good to go.
 - a. This is easier if you read it out loud or have a friend read it out loud to you.

Basic Literary Analysis Outline

- I. Introduction (1 of 4 styles)
 - a. Thesis: This essay will analyze ___(title of short story)____. It will employ a literary analysis that focuses on ___(choose 1: setting / plot / characters / theme)_____.
- II. Summary Paragraph (see summary formatting page)
 - i. USE ONLY IF ASKED FOR BY YOUR PROFESSOR
- III. Body Analysis
 - a. Textual Warrant 1
 - b. Textual Warrant 2
 - c. Textual Warrant 3
- IV. Conclusion