

ENG4U
Essay Unit

Essays The Act of Writing • Glossary of Useful Terms

You should be familiar with the elements of the essay, as well as the following terms:

Abstract/Concrete	Irony
Anecdote	Juxtaposition (contrast)
Allusion	Literary & Poetic Devices
Colloquial/Slang	Narrative
Conciseness	Paradox
Connotations/Denotations	Sarcasm/Satire
Deduction/Induction	Subjective/Objective
Dialogue/Prose	Tone
Diction	Transitions
Figures of Speech	Symbol/Allegory

Analyzing Essays

As a class, we will read 5-6 essays and analyze each extensively. As you read each essay you should be taking notes that would answer the following questions in order to be prepared for a class discussion. This analysis work will prepare you for the essay midterm test. It is imperative that you answer each question in depth and include the “why’s.”

- What is the thesis?
- Identify at least 3 arguments that support this thesis
- Identify the style of writing by explaining the **significance** of the language used (types of sentences; vocabulary; punctuation) and use examples to clarify
- Identify and explain the **significance** of any literary/rhetorical devices found in the essay
- Explain the degree of effectiveness of this essay and give specific reasons why

All responses should be written on lined paper in your notebooks.

Essays Seminars • Topic: _____

You are to develop a seminar in order to teach the class about **one** essay from the texts *The Act of Writing*, *Essays: Thought and Style*, or *Viewpoints*. You must analyze the essay to find:

- A. The thesis and theme
- B. Supporting arguments
- C. Style of writing (level of language)
- D. Structure of the essay (i.e., cause and effect, comparative)
- E. Literary devices (imagery, symbolism, tone, point of view)
- F. Degree of effectiveness of form to topic

The seminar will be 10 minutes in length with an additional 5 minutes allowed for discussion. You are encouraged to be creative and use any visuals that will highlight your discussion of the essay. You may work with a partner, but each student is responsible for an **equal** amount of preparation and oral participation. A **one page summary (typed and double spaced)** of your seminar must be submitted on the day of presentation with the rubric.

For **all students not presenting**, you are responsible for preparing for the seminar by reading the essay the night before and preparing a response (max. 1 page) to the essay, including: the thesis and supporting arguments, style, structure, devices and your opinion of its effectiveness. These responses will be checked daily for homework marks. In order for these seminars to be informative, the entire class must become involved in the process.

You will have approximately 3-4 days for preparation before seminars begin. Make sure the day you choose for your presentation is free from other conflicts because you will not be assigned another day, due to time constraints. This assignment is an important exercise to prepare you for the midterm essay test.

Name(s): _____

Category	Description	Mark
Content (K/U)	Effective use of class time/group involvement	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Content (K/U)	Sound knowledge of topic	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Content (K/U)	Frequent and appropriate references to support ideas	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Content (K/U)	Logical sequence of thought–plan	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Content (K/U)	Effective analysis of material	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Delivery (Comm)	Confident, audible delivery (enthusiasm)	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Delivery (Comm)	Thinking on your feet, not too dependent on notes	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Delivery (Comm)	Constant eye contact/talking to audience	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Delivery (Comm)	Use of time/pace	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Delivery (Comm)	Use of strategies to create and maintain class interest	0 ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5
Total Mark for Seminar		/50

If you are doing it right, research is a tedious and time-consuming process. Finding a place to start is often the most difficult step. Here are some thoughts to start you on your journey.

This job will be more pleasant for you if you can get interested in your topic. My first suggestion is to **try to find something that interests you or something in your field of study**. What are your occupational prospects? What is innovative or controversial in your potential “field of employment”? Perhaps you may wish to talk to someone in your field or peruse through a professional journal or textbook.

Think of topics discussed in your other classes. You cannot use the same focus, and definitely not the same papers, but you may think about using some research and pursuing new and unique directions. Perhaps something you learn in another class may suggest an interesting area of exploration. Think also of a class discussion that have sparked your interest.

As a last resort, **pay attention to the news**. Look through a weekly news magazine like *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *Macleans*. Pay particular attention to current social problems. What are some of the things about our society or the world in general that worry **you**? Remember, it will be much easier to work on the paper if you genuinely care about the topic. You will be reading, thinking, and writing about this topic for the next month approximately.

Here are some general suggestions. They are meant to stimulate your thinking about possibilities. You may need to narrow or broaden your scope. You are not required to choose from this list, as I much prefer you to come up with your own topic. However, if you are desperate, here are some places to start.

Education

- Mainstreaming in public schools
- Religious and ethnically focused schools
- Charter schools
- Year-round schooling
- IQ testing - biased or useful
- Security guards in high schools
- Homeschooling
- Alternative ways of funding public schools

Social Problems

- Homelessness
- Access to medical care
- Welfare-to-work programs
- Violence in our society
- Illegal immigrants
- Women in the military
- Increasing disparity between rich and poor
- Illiteracy and television
- Television is harmful to children
- Prison reform
- Stem cell research
- Airport security measures
- Geoengineering
- International adoption
- Religious cults

- Police brutality (recent taser issues)
- Equal opportunity for women in business, politics, sports, etc.
- Water pollution
- Depletion and/or drying up of major world rivers and bodies of water
- Cell phones and brain cancer
- Human trafficking

Political Issues

- Effectiveness of the United Nations
- Domestic terrorism
- Amnesty International
- US intervention in foreign countries
- World hunger
- Importing products created by child labour
- Native Canadian rights
- Buying RED
- Crisis in the Middle East

Business Topics

- White collar crime
- US recession
- Safety and children's toys
- Industry's effect on Third World nations
- Buying "fair trade" products such as coffee and "community trade" programs at The Body Shop

You may **NOT** choose broad, overdone topics like:

- Abortion
- Capital punishment
- Euthanasia
- Gun control
- Saving the rain forest
- Animal testing
- Legalization of marijuana

Remember, your topic must be approved before you get too far into your work.

So the next step is to select your topic and begin locating resources. I will be expecting you to have "worked out the kinks" and be ready to create your outline by ...

Let the fun begin!

Essays

Developing a Research Essay

Formatting and developing an essay on a controversial issue:

Brainstorm	topics (on board) and then on paper	1 class
Research	(where? how?) bring to class what you find what/how to document how to use the internet record info for <u>works cited</u>	2 classes
Outline	thesis statement/arguments/examples/hook/conclusion reproduce template on computer	2 classes
Draft	writing structurally sound sentences with variety include citing in text and embedded quotations rich vocabulary with correct usage put on computer for editing	2 classes
Own Edit	use checklist – teacher directed	1 class
1st Edit	peer edit with checklist	1 class
2nd Edit	different peer edit with checklist	1 class

10 classes/days

Hand in the following week.

There are many different forms of writing, but most of them can be classified under the DANE-CCC acronym:

- D**escriptive
- A**rgumentative and Persuasive
- N**arrative
- E**xpository
- C**ompare and Contrast
- C**ause and Effect
- C**ritical Analysis

Descriptive Writing

Descriptive writing generally uses a lot of sensory details that appeal to the five senses. It can also describe what something is, how it works, or how something happened. A literary device that is directly associated with this form of writing is imagery.

Argumentative and Persuasive Writing

Argumentative and persuasive writing both try to convince the reader to accept the writer's point of view. This writing can either be serious or funny, but is always focused on convincing the reader of the validity of an opinion.

Although both argumentative and persuasive writing aim to convince someone of something, they are different in how they approach this goal. Argumentative writing relies solely on facts and logic to convince the reader, while persuasive writing, which also uses facts and logic, employ rhetorical devices/persuasive strategies to convince the reader. While rhetorical devices/persuasive strategies enhance a persuasive essay, they are considered fallacies in an argumentative essay.

Narrative Writing

Narrative writing tells a story. Generally, narrative writing is conversational in style, and tells of a personal experience. It uses action verbs, and is most commonly written in the first person, present tense to communicate a feeling of immediacy and currency in the story.

Expository Writing

Expository writing is informative, and explains how something is done. It generally explains actions that should be performed in a series. This form of writing is considered "how-to" writing, and is found in most instruction manuals. It may be in the form of step-by-step instructions or in a story form with the instructions/explanations subtly given along the way.

Compare and Contrast Writing

Compare and contrast writing discusses the similarities and differences between two concepts, issues, people, places, things, etc. This type of writing can be an unbiased discussion, which merely discusses a subject with no argumentation, or it may be an attempt to convince the reader of the writer's opinion.

Cause and Effect Writing

Cause and effect writing explains how and/or why some event happened, and what resulted from the event. This is a study of the relationship between two or more events or experiences. It can discuss both causes and effects, or it can address one or the other. A cause essay usually discusses the reasons how and/or why something happened. An effect essay discusses what happened after a specific event or circumstance.

Critical Analysis Writing

A critical essay analyses the strengths, weaknesses, and methods of someone else's work. Generally, these essays begin with a brief overview of the main points of the text, movie, or piece of art, followed by an analysis of the work's meaning. It should then discuss how well the author/creator accomplishes his/her goals and makes his/her points. A critical essay can be written about another essay, story, book, poem, movie, or work of art.

Key Words	Questions and Strategies
Analyse	<p><i>Analyse the drawing in the Models section.</i></p> <p>Analyse literally means "to take apart." In order to analyse something, one must examine and discuss it one part at a time, and be able to say how each part contributes to the whole.</p>
Compare	<p><i>Compare Darwin's theory of natural selection with Lamarck's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics.</i></p> <p>When one compares, one should look for qualities and characteristics that resemble each other. The term <i>compare</i> is usually accompanied by <i>with</i>, implying that one is to emphasize similarities. However, one can also mention differences.</p>
Contrast	<p><i>Contrast the laws pertaining to consumer protection fifty years ago with those in effect today.</i></p> <p>When one is asked to contrast, one should present differences, although one may also mention similarities. Focus, however, on those things, qualities, events, or problems that one can contrast.</p>
Criticize	<p><i>Criticize the federal government's policy on Canadian ownership of Canadian resources.</i></p> <p>When one is asked to criticize, one should not merely find fault but give <i>one's</i> opinions about both the merits and demerits of something. Take a strong stand, but do present all the facts; in other words, for the above question, one should discuss the reasons why the government did what it did.</p>
Discuss	<p><i>Discuss C.D. Howe's role in the pipeline debate of the 1950s.</i></p> <p>The term <i>discuss</i> appears often in exam questions. One should analyse, examine, and present the pros and cons regarding the problems involved in the question. One will receive a good mark if one's details are complete and thorough.</p>
Explain	<p><i>Explain the phlogiston theory in no more than 100 words.</i></p> <p>One is expected to write an expository paragraph when asked to explain. This will require some description of the person or topic involved. Consider interesting and distinguishing features. It is important that one explain clearly and concisely. One should appear to one's marker as an authority on the subject; therefore, write with conviction.</p>
Illustrate	<p><i>In "Granite Point," how is it made obvious that Mathew murdered Kloski? Use specific evidence to illustrate your proof.</i></p> <p>A question on an English or history exam that asks one to illustrate with specific, concrete examples usually requires that one explain or clarify one's answer by presenting quotations from the text (seldom, if ever, diagrams). One's opinion by itself is not what is required. If one is not able to bring a primary source (in this case, a copy of the story) into the exam room, one will have to paraphrase rather than give direct quotations to support one's claims.</p> <p>Note: Begin the essay by rephrasing the question; for example, "In 'Granite Point' Valgardson makes it obvious that Mathew killed Kloski; here is the proof." Then follow basic essay structure. By rephrasing the question in this way, one will find that all one has to do is provide illustrations to prove one's claim.</p>

Key Words	Questions and Strategies
Justify	<p><i>Justify the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War.</i></p> <p>One must prove a point or statement when one is asked to justify it. Show evidence for one's decisions. One must convince one's reader that one is right.</p>
List	<p><i>List five symptoms of diabetes mellitus.</i></p> <p>The term <i>list</i> is confusing. Is one to write an essay, or is one to present a list? If one is asked to write an essay, obviously one must enumerate in paragraph form; but if one is not, one should present a brief, itemized series. Indicate that one is presenting a list because that is what is asked for in the question.</p>
Relate	<p><i>Relate the discovery of the Athabasca tar sands to future development in northern Alberta.</i></p> <p>When one is asked to relate one thing to another, one should emphasize the relationships, connections, or associations between them.</p>
Review	<p><i>Review Laurence Olivier's film of Hamlet.</i></p> <p>A review demands critical examination. Do not necessarily mention only the bad points, but what one likes as well. Jot down what one wishes to discuss: the acting, the scenery, the costumes, the sound, and so forth. Then organize your points in a satisfying sequence and briefly analyse or comment on each.</p>
Summarize	<p><i>Summarize the causes of Québec's dispute with Ottawa over the constitution.</i></p> <p>To summarize means that one is to condense. One may, at times, be given a longer passage to summarize; however, if one is given a question like the one above, one should present only the main facts, without illustrations and elaborations.</p>
Trace	<p><i>Trace the route of Samuel Hearne across Canada.</i></p> <p>Obviously a map or diagram would help to answer this question, but if one is asked to write an essay, one should give a description of Hearne's progress, from the point of origin to his final destination, and explain the historical significance of his journey. Consider how it has changed over time. State significant events that influence the person or topic involved. Use chronological order.</p>

Do not be afraid to tell your reader in what way you are interpreting a question. Terms are always open to interpretation. If you have misinterpreted the term but you have explained what you are doing and you answer with conviction, you will receive more credit than if your reader has to figure out what you are trying to do.

As you continue to study and write assignments and exams, add to this list of key words. Do not be afraid to ask an instructor "What exactly does this term mean?" Then add the term and explanation to your list.

Brainstorming can help you choose a topic, develop an approach to a topic, or deepen your understanding of the topic's potential.

If you consciously take advantage of your natural thinking processes by gathering your brain's energies into a "storm," you can transform these energies into written words or diagrams that will lead to lively, vibrant writing.

Whether you are starting with too much information or not enough, brainstorming can help you to put a new writing task in motion or revive a project that hasn't reached completion. Let's take a look at each case:

When you've got nothing: You might need a storm to approach when you feel "blank" about the topic, devoid of inspiration, full of anxiety about the topic, or just too tired to craft an orderly outline. In this case, brainstorming stirs up the dust, whips some air into our stilled pools of thought, and gets the breeze of inspiration moving again.

When you've got too much: There are times when you have too much chaos in your brain and need to bring in some conscious order. In this case, brainstorming forces the mental chaos and random thoughts to rain out onto the page, giving you some concrete words or schemas that you can then arrange according to their logical relations.

What follows are great ideas on how to brainstorm—ideas from professional writers, novice writers, people who would rather avoid writing, and people who spend a lot of time brainstorming about...well, how to brainstorm.

Try out several of these options and challenge yourself to vary the techniques you rely on; some techniques might suit a particular writer, academic discipline, or assignment better than others. If the technique you try first doesn't seem to help you, move right along and try some others.

Listing/Bulleting:

In this technique you jot down lists of words or phrases under a particular topic. Try this one by basing your list either

- on the general topic
- on one or more words from your particular thesis claim, or
- on a word or idea that is the complete opposite of your original word or idea.

For example, if your general assignment is to write about the changes in inventions over time, and your specific thesis claims that "the 20th century presented a large number of inventions to advance US society by improving upon the status of 19th-century society," you could brainstorm two different lists to ensure you are covering the topic thoroughly and that your thesis will be easy to prove.

The first list might be based on your thesis; you would jot down as many 20th-century inventions as you could, as long as you know of their positive effects on society. The second list might be based on the opposite claim and you would instead jot down inventions that you associate with a decline in that society's quality. You could do the same two lists for 19th-century inventions and then compare the evidence from all four lists.

Using multiple lists will help you to gather more perspective on the topic and ensure that, sure enough, your thesis is solid as a rock, or, ...uh oh, your thesis is full of holes and you'd better alter your claim to one you can prove.

Cubing:

Cubing enables you to consider your topic from six different directions; just as a cube is six-sided, your cubing brainstorming will result in six "sides" or approaches to the topic. Take a sheet of paper, consider your topic, and respond to these six commands.

1. Describe it.
2. Compare it.
3. Associate it.
4. Analyze it.
5. Apply it.
6. Argue for and against it.

Look over what you've written. Do any of the responses suggest anything new about your topic? What interactions do you notice among the "sides"? That is, do you see patterns repeating, or a theme emerging that you could use to approach the topic or draft a thesis? Does one side seem particularly fruitful in getting your brain moving? Could that one side help you draft your thesis statement? Use this technique in a way that serves your topic. It should, at least, give you a broader awareness of the topic's complexities, if not a sharper focus on what you will do with it.

Similes:

In this technique, complete the following sentence:

_____ is/was/are/were like _____.

In the first blank put one of the terms or concepts your paper centers on. Then try to brainstorm as many answers as possible for the second blank, writing them down as you come up with them.

After you have produced a list of options, look over your ideas. What kinds of ideas come forward? What patterns or associations do you find?

Clustering/ Mapping/ Webbing:

The general idea:

This technique has three (or more) different names, according to how you describe the activity itself or what the end product looks like. In short, you will write a lot of different terms and phrases onto a sheet of paper in a random fashion and later go back to link the words together into a sort of "map" or "web" that forms groups from the separate parts. Allow yourself to start with chaos. After the chaos subsides, you will be able to create some order out of it.

How to do it:

1. Take your sheet(s) of paper and write your main topic in the center, using a word or two or three.

2. Moving out from the center and filling in the open space any way you are driven to fill it, start to write down, fast, as many related concepts or terms as you can associate with the central topic. Jot them quickly, move into another space, jot some more down, move to another blank, and just keep moving around and jotting. If you run out of similar concepts, jot down opposites, jot down things that are only slightly related, or jot down your grandpa's name, but try to keep moving and associating. Don't worry about the (lack of) sense of what you write, for you can choose to keep or toss out these ideas when the activity is over.
3. Once the storm has subsided and you are faced with a hail of terms and phrases, you can start to cluster. Circle terms that seem related and then draw a line connecting the circles. Find some more and circle them and draw more lines to connect them with what you think is closely related. When you run out of terms that associate, start with another term. Look for concepts and terms that might relate to that term. Circle them and then link them with a connecting line. Continue this process until you have found all the associated terms. Some of the terms might end up uncircled, but these "loners" can also be useful to you. (Note: You can use different colored pens/pencils/chalk for this part, if you like. If that's not possible, try to vary the kind of line you use to encircle the topics; use a wavy line, a straight line, a dashed line, a dotted line, a zig-zagging line, etc. in order to see what goes with what).
4. There! When you stand back and survey your work, you should see a set of clusters, or a big web, or a sort of map: hence the names for this activity. At this point you can start to form conclusions about how to approach your topic. There are about as many possible results to this activity as there are stars in the night sky, so what you do from here will depend on your particular results. Let's take an example or two in order to illustrate how you might form some logical relationships between the clusters and loners you've decided to keep. At the end of the day, what you do with the particular "map" or "cluster set" or "web" that you produce depends on what you need. What does this map or web tell you to do? Explore an option or two and get your draft going!

Journalistic Questions:

In this technique you would use the "big six" questions that journalists rely on to thoroughly research a story. The six are: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, and How?. Write each question word on a sheet of paper, leaving space between them. Then, write out some sentences or phrases in answer, as they fit your particular topic. You might also answer into a tape recorder if you'd rather talk out your ideas.

Now look over your batch of responses. Do you see that you have more to say about one or two of the questions? Or, are your answers for each question pretty well balanced in depth and content? Was there one question that you had absolutely no answer for? How might this awareness help you to decide how to frame your thesis claim or to organize your paper? Or, how might it reveal what you must work on further, doing library research or interviews or further note-taking?

For example, if your answers reveal that you know a lot more about "where" and "why" something happened than you know about "what" and "when," how could you use this lack of balance to direct your research or to shape your paper? How might you organize your paper so that it emphasizes the known versus the unknown aspects of evidence in the field of study? What else might you do with your results?

Relationship Between the Parts:

In this technique, begin by writing the following pairs of terms on opposite margins of one sheet of paper:

Whole	Parts
Part	Parts of Parts
Part	Parts of Parts
Part	Parts of Parts

Looking over these four groups of pairs, start to fill in your ideas below each heading. Keep going down through as many levels as you can. Now, look at the various parts that comprise the parts of your whole concept. What sorts of conclusions can you draw according to the patterns, or lack of patterns, that you see?

Thinking Outside the Box:

Even when you are writing within a particular academic discipline, you can take advantage of your semesters of experience in other courses from other departments. Let's say you are writing a paper for an English course. You could ask yourself, "Hmmm, if I were writing about this very same topic in a biology course or using this term in a history course, how might I see or understand it differently? Are there varying definitions for this concept within, say, philosophy or physics, that might encourage me to think about this term from a new, richer point of view?"

For example, when discussing "culture" in your English 11, communications, or cultural studies course, you could incorporate the definition of "culture" that is frequently used in the biological sciences. Remember those little Petri dishes from your lab experiments in high school? Those dishes are used to "culture" substances for bacterial growth and analysis, right? How might it help you write your paper if you thought of "culture" as a medium upon which certain things will grow, will develop in new ways or will even flourish beyond expectations, but upon which the growth of other things might be retarded, significantly altered, or stopped altogether?

Using Charts or Shapes:

This is where graphic organizers can come into play. If you are more visually inclined, you might create charts, graphs, or tables in lieu of word lists or phrases as you try to shape or explore an idea. You could use the same phrases or words that are central to your topic and try different ways to arrange them spatially, say in a graph, on a grid, or in a table or chart. You might even try the trusty old flow chart. The important thing here is to get out of the realm of words alone and see how different spatial representations might help you see the relationships among your ideas. If you can't imagine the shape of a chart at first, just put down the words on the page and then draw lines between or around them. Or think of a shape. Do your ideas most easily form a triangle? square? umbrella? Can you put some ideas in parallel formation? In a line?

Consider Purpose and Audience:

Think about the parts of communication involved in any act of writing or speaking event: purpose and audience. What is your purpose? What are you trying to do? What verb captures your intent? Are you trying to inform? Convince? Describe? Each purpose will lead you to a different set of information and help you shape material to include and exclude in a draft. Write about why you are writing this draft in this form.

Who is your audience? Who are you communicating with beyond the grader? What does that audience need to know? What do they already know? What information does that audience need first, second, third? Write about who you are writing to and what they need.

Dictionaries, Thesauruses, Encyclopedias:

When all else fails...this is a tried and true method, loved for centuries by writers of all stripe. Visit the library reference areas or stop by the Writing Center to browse various dictionaries, thesauruses (or other guide books and reference texts), encyclopedias or surf their online counterparts. Sometimes these basic steps are the best ones. It is almost guaranteed that you'll learn several things you did not know.

If you're looking at a hard copy reference, turn to your most important terms and see what sort of variety you find in the definitions. The obscure or archaic definition might help you to appreciate the term's breadth or realize how much its meaning has changed as the language changed. Could that realization be built into your paper somehow?

If you go to online sources, use their own search functions to find your key terms and see what suggestions they offer. For example, if you plug "good" into a thesaurus search, you will be given 14 different entries. Whew! If you were analyzing the film *Good Will Hunting*, imagine how you could enrich your paper by addressed the six or seven ways that "good" could be interpreted according to how the scenes, lighting, editing, music, etc., emphasized various aspects of "good."

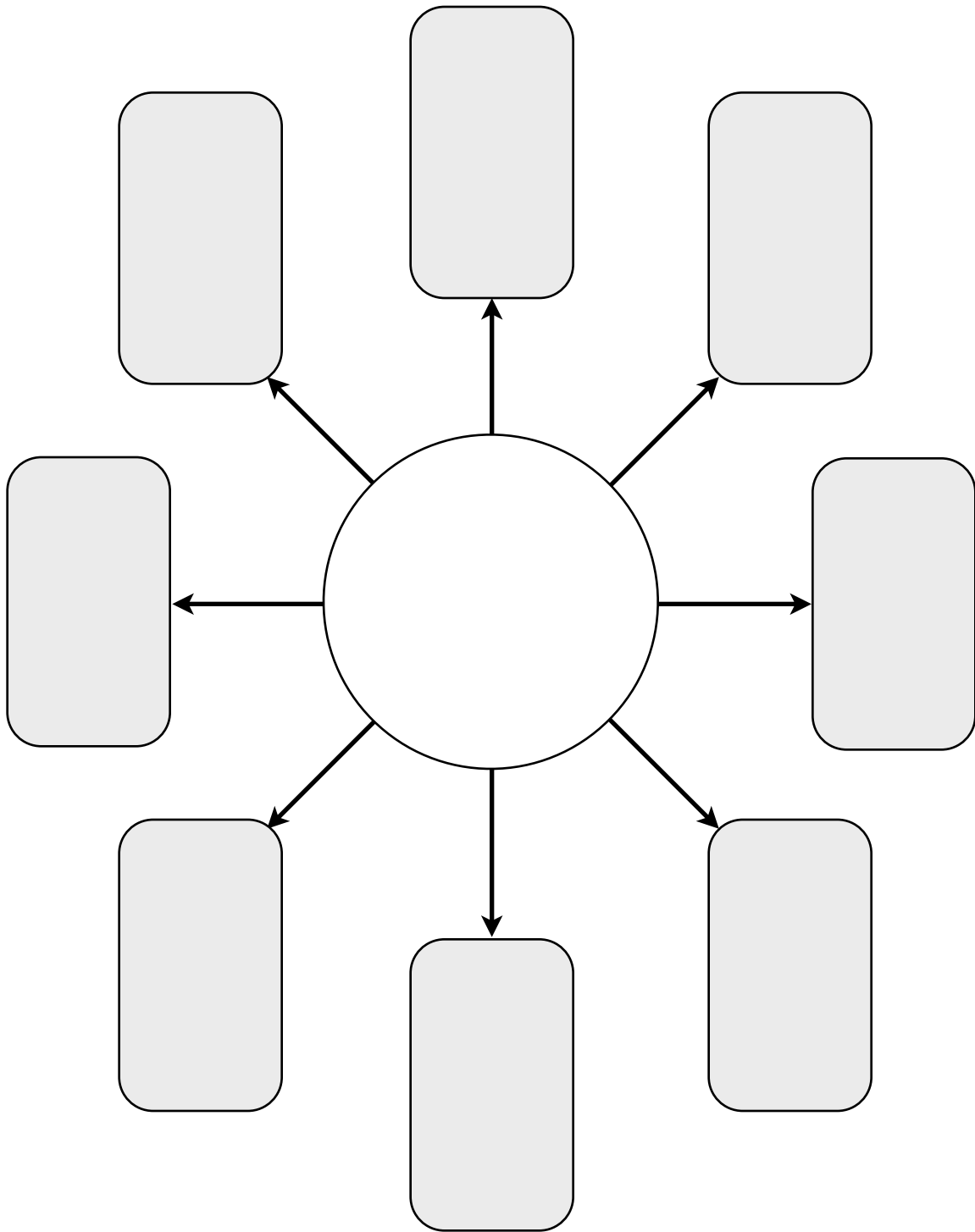
An encyclopedia is sometimes a valuable resource if you need to clarify facts, get quick background, or get a broader context for an event or item. If you are stuck because you have a vague sense of a seemingly important issue, do a quick check with this reference and you may be able to move forward with your ideas.

Closing

Take the next step and start to write your first draft, or fill in those gaps you've been brainstorming about to complete your "almost ready" paper.

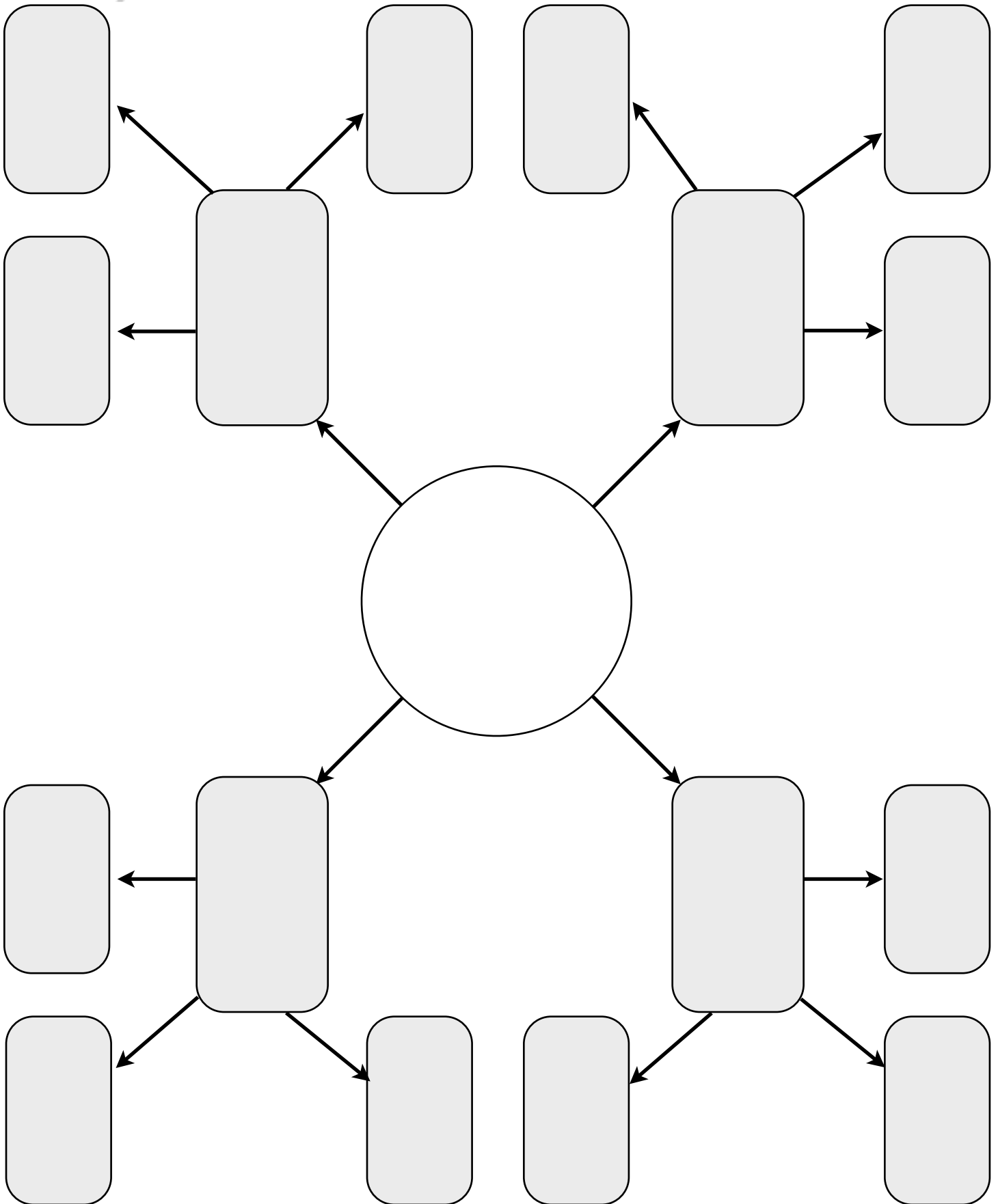
Start to write out some larger chunks (large groups of sentences or full paragraphs) to expand upon your smaller clusters and phrases. Keep building from there into larger sections of your paper. You don't have to start at the beginning of the draft. Start writing the section that comes together most easily. You can always go back to write the introduction later.

Remember, once you've begun the paper, you can stop and try another brainstorming technique whenever you feel stuck. Keep the energy moving and try several techniques to find what suits you or the particular project you are working on.



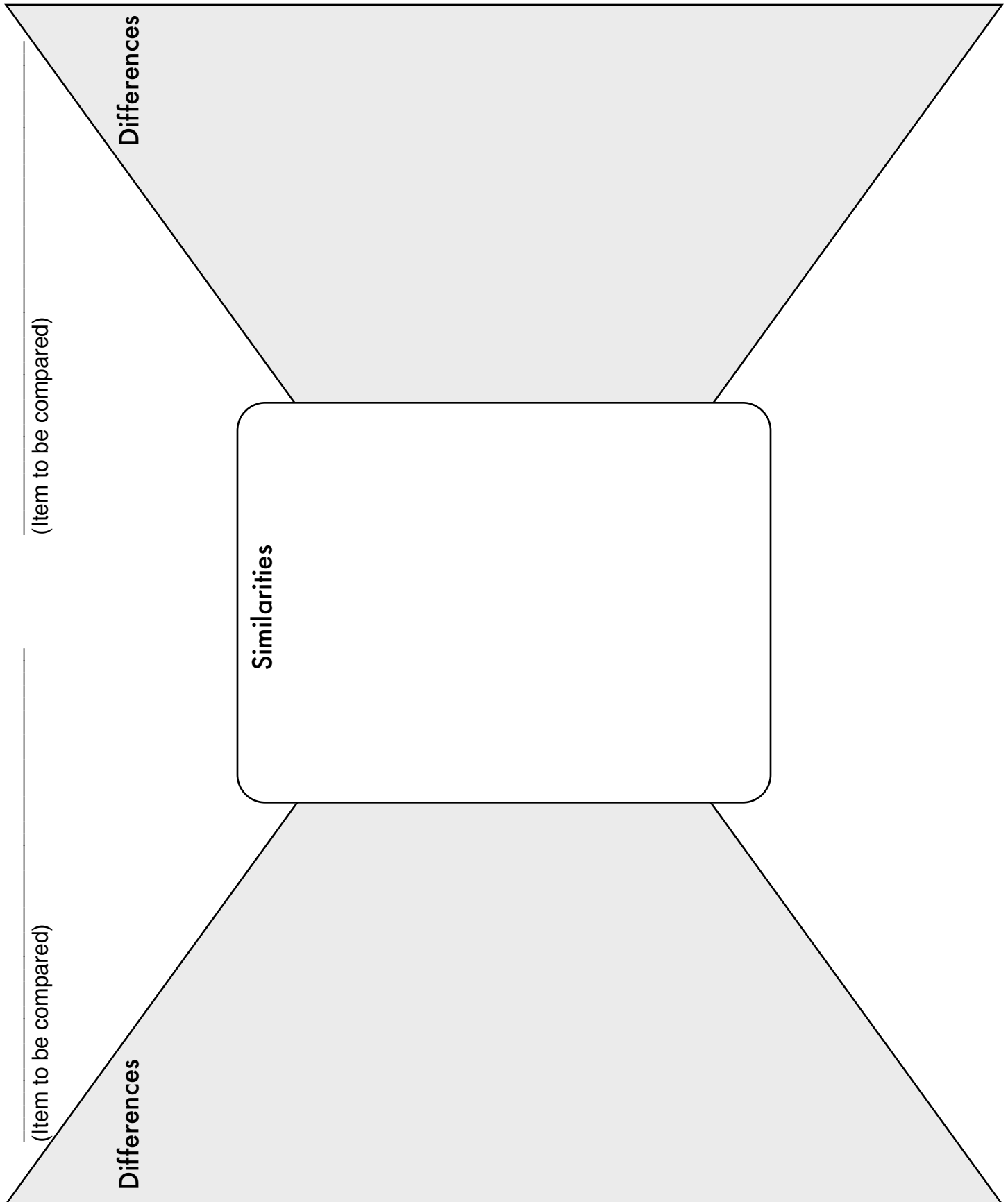
Essay

Brainstorming • Mind Map/Web



Essay

Brainstorming • Bow Tie



What is a Thesis Statement?

Almost all of us—even if we don’t do it consciously—look early in an essay for a one- or two-sentence condensation of the argument or analysis that is to follow. We refer to that condensation as a thesis statement.

Why Should Your Essay Contain a Thesis Statement?

- to test your ideas by distilling them into a sentence or two
- to better organize and develop your argument
- to provide your reader with a “guide” to your argument

In general, your thesis statement will accomplish these goals if you think of the thesis as the answer to the question your paper explores.

How to Generate a Thesis Statement if the Topic is Assigned

Almost all assignments, no matter how complicated, can be reduced to a single question. Your first step, then, is to distill the assignment into a specific question. For example, if your assignment is, “Write a report to the local school board explaining the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class,” turn the request into a question like, “What are the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class?” After you’ve chosen the question your essay will answer, compose one or two complete sentences answering that question.

Q: “What are the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class?”

A: “The potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class are . . .”

OR

A: “Using computers in a fourth-grade class promises to improve . . .”

The answer to the question is the thesis statement for the essay.

How to Tell a Strong Thesis Statement from a Weak One

1. A strong thesis statement takes some sort of stand.

Remember that your thesis needs to show your conclusions about a subject. For example, if you are writing a paper for a class on fitness, you might be asked to choose a popular weight-loss product to evaluate. Here are two thesis statements:

There are some negative and positive aspects to the Banana Herb Tea Supplement.

This is a weak thesis statement. First, it fails to take a stand. Second, the phrase *negative and positive aspects* is vague.

Because Banana Herb Tea Supplement promotes rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, it poses a potential danger to customers.

This is a strong thesis because it takes a stand, and because it's specific.

2. A strong thesis statement justifies discussion.

Your thesis should indicate the point of the discussion. If your assignment is to write a paper on kinship systems, using your own family as an example, you might come up with either of these two thesis statements:

My family is an extended family.

This is a weak thesis because it merely states an observation. Your reader won’t be able to tell the point of the statement, and will probably stop reading.

While most American families would view consanguineal marriage as a threat to the nuclear family structure, many Iranian families, like my own, believe that these marriages help reinforce kinship ties in an extended family.

This is a strong thesis because it shows how your experience contradicts a widely-accepted view. A good strategy for creating a strong thesis is to show that the topic is controversial. Readers will be interested in reading the rest of the essay to see how you support your point.

3. A strong thesis statement expresses one main idea.

Readers need to be able to see that your paper has one main point. If your thesis statement expresses more than one idea, then you might confuse your readers about the subject of your paper. For example:

Companies need to exploit the marketing potential of the Internet, and Web pages can provide both advertising and customer support.

This is a weak thesis statement because the reader can't decide whether the paper is about marketing on the Internet or Web pages. To revise the thesis, the relationship between the two ideas needs to become more clear. One way to revise the thesis would be to write:

Because the Internet is filled with tremendous marketing potential, companies should exploit this potential by using Web pages that offer both advertising and customer support.

This is a strong thesis because it shows that the two ideas are related. Hint: a great many clear and engaging thesis statements contain words like *because*, *since*, *so*, *although*, *unless*, and *however*.

4. A strong thesis statement is specific.

A thesis statement should show exactly what your paper will be about, and will help you keep your paper to a manageable topic. For example, if you're writing a seven-to-ten page paper on hunger, you might say:

World hunger has many causes and effects.

This is a weak thesis statement for two major reasons. First, *world hunger* can't be discussed thoroughly in seven to ten pages. Second, *many causes and effects* is vague. You should be able to identify specific causes and effects. A revised thesis might look like this:

Hunger persists in Glandelinia because jobs are scarce and farming in the infertile soil is rarely profitable.

This is a strong thesis statement because it narrows the subject to a more specific and manageable topic, and it also identifies the specific causes for the existence of hunger.

Source: Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

Thesis Structure: Topic – Position – Area of Investigation

Topic = what (subject matter) the thesis is about • **Position** = your position (on a topic/issue) that makes the thesis arguable • **Area of Investigation** = what gives the essay specificity of scope (who/what your statement affects or applies to)

Examples:

- Inadequate early childhood parenting (**topic**) produces irreparable damage (**position**) in adults' psychological health (**area of investigation**).
- Minority government (**topic**) provides the best form of government (**position**) in the Canadian federal system (**area of investigation**).

Comparative Example:

- The characters, in *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck and *Water for Elephants* by Sarah Gruen, face similar calamities in their struggle to prosper during the Great Depression.

When reviewing your first draft and its working thesis, ask yourself the following:

- **Do I answer the question?** Re-reading the question prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.
- **Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?** If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.
- **Is my thesis statement specific enough?** Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like “good” or “successful”, see if you can be more specific: *why* is something “good”; *what specifically* makes something “successful”?
- **Does my thesis pass the “So what?” test?** If a reader’s first response is, “So what?” then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
- **Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?** If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It’s okay to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of writing your paper. Remember, always assess and revise your writing as necessary.
- **Does my thesis pass the “how and why?” test?** If a reader’s first response is “how?” or “why?” your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

Examples of Theses

1. Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a great American novel.

Why is this thesis weak? Your teacher is probably not interested in your opinion of the novel; instead, he/she wants you to think about *why* it’s such a great novel—what do Huck’s adventures tell us about life, about America, about coming of age, about race relations, etc.?

2. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.

Here’s a working thesis with potential: you have highlighted an important aspect of the novel for investigation; however, it’s still not clear what your analysis will reveal. Your reader is intrigued, but is still thinking, “So what? What’s the point of this contrast? What does it signify?”

3. Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* suggest that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave “civilized” society and go back to nature.

This final thesis statement presents an interpretation of a literary work based on an analysis of its content. Of course, for the essay itself to be successful, you must now present evidence from the novel that will convince the reader of your interpretation.

A good introductory paragraph is between 4-7 sentences in length, begins with a hook strategy, and ends with a clear thesis statement. Not only should your hook serve to immediately grab the reader's interest, but it should be a natural lead-in to your thesis, and a meaningful opportunity for the reader to relate to the topic of your essay, but not directly to the text.

A hook is named for its ability to catch the reader's attention and make the reader want to read on. It is essential that stories, news articles, and especially essays begin with good hooks because a writer is often judged within the first few sentences. Just as the news tries to stimulate our fears by announcing a "danger in our water supply," a writer must try to bring the reader from his or her world into the world of the essay. This is done with a few choice words at the beginning of the essay: the infamous hook.

It is not easy to think of how to make someone want to read an essay about a novel. It's not even easy to make them want to read some novels. The key is to say something that the reader can relate to by bringing the **theme** of the novel you are discussing to the forefront, without directly mentioning the novel, and applying it to current "fascinating" topics of discussion.

1. **Anecdote/Scenario/Analogy:** Use an anecdote or scenario that relates to your topic to relate to the reader.

Example (courage topic): This man was in the Vietnam War, and he admitted that he was terrified every time he had to go into battle. Even so, people consider him one of the most courageous men they have ever known. It is not the absence of fear that defines courage, but the ability of one to force oneself to take action in spite of fear.

Example (superficiality topic): The models that grace the pages of magazines seem to be better than any one one might ever meet; they seem elegant, untouchable, and perfect. But, just as magazine covers are manipulated to hide imperfections, people, also, sometimes fool themselves into ignoring the flaws of individuals whom they have built up to be perfect beings.

Note: Yes, it would be natural to use "I" for this strategy, but there are ways to do this effectively without using personal pronouns.

2. **Shocking Information:** Use a statistic, fact, or statement that is unusual, bizarre, interesting, or shocking that is related to your topic to catch the reader's attention.

Example (good and evil topic): All human beings are capable of the most gruesome crimes imaginable. It is only because of the customs and controls of civilization that we do not become brute savages.

Example (depression topic): On a recent anonymous survey, over ninety percent of high school males admitted to secretly enjoying the music of 'N Sync and to practicing their "hot dance moves."

Note: Again, the fact or statistic would have to relate to the topic you are discussing. It could be a modern-day fact or statistic, or perhaps an interesting fact from Shakespeare's time.

3. **Quotation:** Use a quotation, song lyric, or short poem related to your topic to relate to the reader.

Example (leadership or insecurity topic): "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, which most frightens us." Nelson Mandela

Example (Utopia topic): "But I like the inconveniences."

"We don't," said the Controller. "We prefer to do things comfortably."

"But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin." *BNW*

Note: This does not necessarily mean a quote from the text. In fact, it is recommended that you save textual evidence for your body paragraphs. Can you think of a famous quote that relates to your topic? How?

One or more of the following strategies may help you write an effective conclusion.

1. Play the “So What” Game. If you’re stuck and feel like your conclusion isn’t saying anything new or interesting. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, say “So what?” or “Why should anybody care?” Then ponder that question and answer it.
2. Return to the theme or themes in the introduction. This strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding.
3. Synthesize, don’t summarize: include a brief summary of the paper’s main points, but don’t simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you made, and the support and examples you used, fit together. Pull it all together.
4. Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for your paper.
5. Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study. This can redirect your reader’s thought process and help him/her to apply your info and ideas to his/her own life or to see the broader implications.
6. Point to broader implications. For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.

Strategies to Avoid in Conclusions

1. Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as “in conclusion,” “in summary,” or “in closing”. Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across as wooden and trite in writing.
2. Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion.
3. Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of an analytical paper.
4. Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

This resource will help you write clearly by eliminating unnecessary words and rearranging your phrases.

The goal of concise writing is to use the most effective words. Concise writing does not always have the fewest words, but it always uses the strongest ones. Writers often fill sentences with weak or unnecessary words that can be deleted or replaced. Words and phrases should be deliberately chosen for the work they are doing. Like bad employees, words that don't accomplish enough should be fired. When only the most effective words remain, writing will be far more concise and readable.

This resource contains general conciseness tips followed by very specific strategies for pruning sentences.

1. Replace several vague words with more powerful and specific words.

Often, writers use several small and ambiguous words to express a concept, wasting energy expressing ideas better relayed through fewer specific words. As a general rule, more specific words lead to more concise writing. Because of the variety of nouns, verbs, and adjectives, most things have a closely corresponding description. Brainstorming or searching a thesaurus can lead to the word best suited for a specific instance. Notice that the examples below actually convey more as they drop in word count.

Wordy: The politician talked about several of the merits of after-school programs in his speech (14 words)

Concise: The politician touted after-school programs in his speech. (8 words)

Wordy: Suzie believed but could not confirm that Billy had feelings of affection for her. (14 words)

Concise: Suzie assumed that Billy adored her. (6 words)

Wordy: Our website has made available many of the things you can use for making a decision on the best dentist. (20 words)

Concise: Our website presents criteria for determining the best dentist. (9 words)

Wordy: Working as a pupil under someone who develops photos was an experience that really helped me learn a lot. (20 words)

Concise: Working as a photo technician's apprentice was an educational experience. (10 words)

2. Interrogate every word in a sentence

Check every word to make sure that it is providing something important and unique to a sentence. If words are dead weight, they can be deleted or replaced. Other sections in this handout cover this concept more specifically, but there are some general examples below containing sentences with words that could be cut.

Wordy: The teacher demonstrated some of the various ways and methods for cutting words from my essay that I had written for class. (22 words)

Concise: The teacher demonstrated methods for cutting words from my essay. (10 words)

Wordy: Many have made the wise observation that when a stone is in motion rolling down a hill or incline that that moving stone is not as likely to be covered all over with the kind of thick green moss that grows on stationary unmoving things and becomes a nuisance and suggests that those things haven't moved in a long time and probably won't move any time soon. (67 words)

Concise: A rolling stone gathers no moss. (6 words)

3. Combine Sentences.

Some information does not require a full sentence, and can easily be inserted into another sentence without losing any of its value.

Wordy: The supposed crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. This crash is rumored to have occurred in 1947. (24 words)

Concise: The supposed 1947 crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. (16 words)

Eliminating Words

1. Eliminate words that explain the obvious or provide excessive detail

Always consider readers while drafting and revising writing. If passages explain or describe details that would already be obvious to readers, delete or reword them. Readers are also very adept at filling in the non-essential aspects of a narrative, as in the fourth example.

Wordy: I received your inquiry that you wrote about tennis rackets yesterday, and read it thoroughly. Yes, we do have... (19 words)

Concise: I received your inquiry about tennis rackets yesterday. Yes, we do have...(12 words)

Wordy: It goes without saying that we are acquainted with your policy on filing tax returns, and we have every intention of complying with the regulations that you have mentioned. (29 words)

Concise: We intend to comply with the tax-return regulations that you have mentioned. (12 words)

Wordy: Imagine a mental picture of someone engaged in the intellectual activity of trying to learn what the rules are for how to play the game of chess. (27 words)

Concise: Imagine someone trying to learn the rules of chess. (9 words)

Wordy: After booking a ticket to Dallas from a travel agent, I packed my bags and arranged for a taxi to the airport. Once there, I checked in, went through security, and was ready to board. But problems beyond my control led to a three-hour delay before takeoff. (47 words)

Concise: My flight to Dallas was delayed for three hours. (9 words)

Wordy: Baseball, one of our oldest and most popular outdoor summer sports in terms of total attendance at ball parks and viewing on television, has the kind of rhythm of play on the field that alternates between times when players passively wait with no action taking place between the pitches to the batter and then times when they explode into action as the batter hits a pitched ball to one of the players and the player fields it. (77 words)

Concise: Baseball has a rhythm that alternates between waiting and explosive action. (11 words)

2. Eliminate unnecessary determiners and modifiers

Writers sometimes clog up their prose with one or more extra words or phrases that seem to determine narrowly or to modify the meaning of a noun but don't actually add to the meaning of the sentence. Although such words and phrases can be meaningful in the appropriate context, they are often used as "filler" and can easily be eliminated.

Wordy: Any particular type of dessert is fine with me. (9 words)

Concise: Any dessert is fine with me. (6 words)

Wordy: Balancing the budget by Friday is an impossibility without some kind of extra help. (14 words)

Concise: Balancing the budget by Friday is impossible without extra help. (10 words)

Wordy: For all intents and purposes, American industrial productivity generally depends on certain factors that are really more psychological in kind than of any given technological aspect. (26 words)

Concise: American industrial productivity depends more on psychological than on technological factors. (11 words)

Here's a list of some words and phrases that can often be pruned away to make sentences clearer:

kind of; sort of; type of; really; basically; for all intents and purposes; definitely; actually; generally; individual; specific particular

3. Omit repetitive wording

Watch for phrases or longer passages which repeat words with similar meanings. Words that don't build on the content of sentences or paragraphs are rarely necessary.

Wordy: I would appreciate it if you would bring to the attention of your drafting officers the administrator's dislike of long sentences and paragraphs in messages to the field and in other items drafted for her signature or approval, as well as in all correspondence, reports, and studies. Please encourage your section to keep their sentences short. (56 words)

Concise: Please encourage your drafting officers to keep sentences and paragraphs in letters, reports, and studies short. Dr. Lomas, the administrator, has mentioned that reports and memos drafted for her approval recently have been wordy and thus time-consuming. (37 words)

4. Omit Redundant Pairs

Many pairs of words imply each other. Finish implies complete, so the phrase completely finish is redundant in most cases. So are many other pairs of words:

past memories; various differences; each individual _____ basic fundamentals; true facts; important essentials future plans; terrible tragedy; end result; final outcome; free gift; past history; unexpected surprise sudden crisis

A related expression that's not redundant as much as it is illogical is "very unique." Since unique means "one of a kind," adding modifiers of degree such as "very," "so," "especially," "somewhat," "extremely," and so on is illogical. One-of-a-kind-ness has no gradations; something is either unique or it is not.

Wordy: Before the travel agent was completely able to finish explaining the various differences among all of the many very unique vacation packages his travel agency was offering, the customer changed her future plans. (33 words)

Concise: Before the travel agent finished explaining the differences among the unique vacation packages his travel agency was offering, the customer changed her plans. (23 words)

5. Omit Redundant Categories

Specific words imply their general categories, so we usually don't have to state both. We know that a period is a segment of time, that pink is a color, that shiny is an appearance. In each of the following phrases, the general category term can be dropped, leaving just the specific descriptive word:

large in size often times; of a bright color; heavy in weight; period in time; round in shape; at an early time; economics field; of cheap quality; honest in character; of an uncertain condition; in a confused state; unusual in nature; extreme in degree; of a strange type

Wordy: During that time period, many car buyers preferred cars that were pink in color and shiny in appearance. (18 words)

Concise: During that period, many car buyers preferred pink, shiny cars. (10 words)

Wordy: The microscope revealed a group of organisms that were round in shape and peculiar in nature. (16 words)

Concise: The microscope revealed a group of peculiar, round organisms. (9 words)

Changing Phrases

1. Change phrases into single-words and adjectives

Using phrases to convey meaning that could be presented in a single word contributes to wordiness. Convert phrases into single words when possible.

Wordy: The employee with ambition... (4 words)

Concise: The ambitious employee... (3 words)

Wordy: The department showing the best performance... (6 words)

Concise: The best-performing department... (4 words)

Wordy: Jeff Converse, our chief of consulting, suggested at our last board meeting the installation of microfilm equipment in the department of data processing. (23 words)

Concise: At our last board meeting, Chief Consultant Jeff Converse suggested that we install microfilm equipment in the data processing department. (20 words)

Wordy: As you carefully read what you have written to improve your wording and catch small errors of spelling, punctuation, and so on, the thing to do before you do anything else is to try to see where a series of words expressing action

could replace the ideas found in nouns rather than verbs. (53 words)

Concise: As you edit, first find nominalizations that you can replace with verb phrases. (13 words)

2. Change unnecessary that, who, and which clauses into phrases

Using a clause to convey meaning that could be presented in a phrase or even a word contributes to wordiness. Convert modifying clauses into phrases or single words when possible.

Wordy: The report, which was released recently... (6 words)

Concise: The recently released report... (4 words)

Wordy: All applicants who are interested in the job must... (9 words)

Concise: All job applicants must... (4 words)

Wordy: The system that is most efficient and accurate... (8 words)

Concise: The most efficient and accurate system... (6 words)

3. Change Passive Verbs into Active Verbs

See our document on active and passive voice for a more thorough explanation of this topic.

Wordy: An account was opened by Mrs. Simms. (7 words)

Concise: Mrs. Simms opened an account. (5 words)

Wordy: Your figures were checked by the research department. (8 words)

Concise: The research department checked your figures. (6 words)

Avoid Common Pitfalls

1. Avoid overusing expletives at the beginning of sentences

Expletives are phrases of the form it + be-verb or there + be-verb. Such expressions can be rhetorically effective for emphasis in some situations, but overuse or unnecessary use of expletive constructions creates wordy prose. Take the following example: "It is imperative that we find a solution." The same meaning could be expressed with this more succinct wording: "We must find a solution." But using the expletive construction allows the writer to emphasize the urgency of the situation by placing the word imperative near the beginning of the sentence, so the version with the expletive may be preferable.

Still, you should generally avoid excessive or unnecessary use of expletives. The most common kind of unnecessary expletive construction involves an expletive followed by a noun and a relative clause beginning with that, which, or who. In most cases, concise sentences can be created by eliminating the expletive opening, making the noun the subject of the sentence, and eliminating the relative pronoun.

Wordy: It is the governor who signs or vetoes bills. (9 words)

Concise: The governor signs or vetoes bills. (6 words)

Wordy: There are four rules that should be observed: ... (8 words)

Concise: Four rules should be observed:... (5 words)

Wordy: There was a big explosion, which shook the windows, and people ran into the street. (15 words)

Concise: A big explosion shook the windows, and people ran into the street. (12 words)

2. Avoid overusing noun forms of verbs

Use verbs when possible rather than noun forms known as nominalizations. Sentences with many nominalizations usually have forms of be as the main verbs. Using the action verbs disguised in nominalizations as the main verbs--instead of forms of be--can help to create engaging rather than dull prose.

Wordy: The function of this department is the collection of accounts. (10 words)

Concise: This department collects accounts. (4 words)

Wordy: The current focus of the medical profession is disease prevention. (10 words)

Concise: The medical profession currently focuses on disease prevention. (8 words)

3. Avoid unnecessary infinitive phrases

Some infinitive phrases can be converted into finite verbs or brief noun phrases. Making such changes also often results in the replacement of a be-verb with an action verb.

Wordy: The duty of a clerk is to check all incoming mail and to record it. (15 words)

Concise: A clerk checks and records all incoming mail. (8 words)

Wordy: A shortage of tellers at our branch office on Friday and Saturday during rush hours has caused customers to become dissatisfied with service. (23 words)

Concise: A teller shortage at our branch office on Friday and Saturday during rush hours has caused customer dissatisfaction. (18 words)

4. Avoid circumlocutions in favor of direct expressions

Circumlocutions are commonly used roundabout expressions that take several words to say what could be said more succinctly. We often overlook them because many such expressions are habitual figures of speech. In writing, though, they should be avoided since they add extra words without extra meaning. Of course, occasionally you may for rhetorical effect decide to use, say, an expletive construction instead of a more succinct expression. These guidelines should be taken as general recommendations, not absolute rules.

Wordy: At this/that point in time... (2/4 words)

Concise: Now/then... (1 word)

Wordy: In accordance with your request... (5 words)

Concise: As you requested... (3 words)

Below are some other words which may simplify lengthier circumlocutions.

"Because," "Since," "Why" = the reason for; for the reason that; owing/due to the fact that; in light of the fact that; considering the fact that; on the grounds that; this is why

"When" = on the occasion of; in a situation in which; under circumstances in which

"about" = as regards; in reference to; with regard to; concerning the matter of where _____ is concerned

"Must," "Should" = it is crucial that; it is necessary that; there is a need/necessity for it is important that; cannot be avoided

"Can" = is able to; has the opportunity to has the capacity for has the ability to

"May," "Might," "Could" = it is possible that; there is a chance that; it could happen that; the possibility exists for

Wordy: It is possible that nothing will come of these preparations. (10 words)

Concise: Nothing may come of these preparations. (6 words)

Wordy: She has the ability to influence the outcome. (8 words)

Concise: She can influence the outcome. (5 words)

Wordy: It is necessary that we take a stand on this pressing issue. (12 words)

Concise: We must take a stand on this pressing issue. (9 words)

Taken from: *The Purdue OWL*. Purdue U Writing Lab, 2011. Web. 1 Jan. 2011.

Contributors: Ryan Weber, Nick Hurm.

Embedding snippets of quotes is a more effective and sophisticated way to use quotations in your paper. They are often shorter than the original quote, allowing you to use your own words to paraphrase, summarize, or introduce the quote or idea. In addition, they improve sentence fluency. What is a snippet? It is a portion of the original quote. To embed a quotation, take part of your sentence and fuse it with the quotation you want to use in a way that makes sense grammatically and stylistically.

Example: According to scholars, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, biographical information presents Gilman as “a rebellious feminist besides being a medical iconoclast” (1467).

The following excerpts come from the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck:

Original Quote: “I ought to have shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn’t ought to have let no stranger shoot my dog.”

Snippet of quote: “I ought to have shot that dog myself” (Steinbeck 27).

Embedding a quotation at the beginning of a sentence using a snippet of the quote:

“I ought to have shot that dog myself” laments Candy, as he reflects on how he should have performed this task (Steinbeck 27).

Embedding a quotation in the middle of a sentence:

Candy confesses to George and Lennie that he “ought to have shot that dog” himself, and further notes that he regrets allowing a stranger to do it (Steinbeck 27).

Embedding a quotation at the end of a sentence (also referred to as using a lead-in phrase):

Candy reveals to George his deep regret when he states, “I ought to have shot that dog myself” (Steinbeck 27).

Embedding a quotation throughout a sentence (embedding more than one snippet):

Candy exclaims that he “ought to have shot that dog [himself]” and regrets letting a “stranger shoot [his] dog” (Steinbeck 27).

Using Brackets and Ellipses

Brackets [] allow you to do two things: **1.** Change the author’s original wording (i.e., conjugating, changing tense, changing upper or lowercase, pronouns to nouns). **2.** Add words for fluency and clarity.

Ellipsis (...) allows you to delete a word or words from the middle of the original longer quote. **Note:** You do not need them at the beginning or end of a quote, even if you eliminate words. This is considered a snippet.

Example 1: Changing the author’s original wording for better fluency.

Candy realizes that he “ought to have shot that dog [himself]” (Steinbeck 27). What is the change from the original quote? _____

Example 2: Adding words to the author’s original wording.

Candy states to George, “I ought to have shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn’t ought to have let no stranger [Carlson] shoot my dog” (Steinbeck 27).

What has been changed? _____

Practice

Examine the following sentences and quotations. Fuse the two together in a way that makes sense.

My Sentence: Dunstan felt very guilty about the snowball incident.

Quotation: “I was contrite and guilty, for I knew the snowball had been meant for me, but the Dempsters did not seem to think of that” (Davies 11).

Answer: _____

My Sentence: Marcus Antony believed that Brutus was indeed a noble Roman.

Quotation: “This was the noblest Roman of them all” (5.5.68).

Answer: _____

Directions: Practice the skill of embedding quotations into your own sentences. Use each of the four methods: **beginning, middle, end,** and **throughout** a sentence.

Use the following quote and commentary and embed the quotation as directed:

In “The Landlady,” when Billy Weaver first encounters the landlady, her physical appearance and demeanour are misleading. He is drawn into her establishment by her kind and gentle nature.

Quotation: She was about forty-five or fifty years old, and the moment she saw him, she gave him a warm welcoming smile. “Please come in,” she said pleasantly. She stepped aside, holding the door wide open, and Billy found himself automatically starting forward into the house. The compulsion or, more accurately, the desire to

follow after her into that house was extraordinarily strong. "I saw the notice in the window," he said, holding himself back. "Yes, I know." "I was wondering about a room." "It's all ready for you, my dear," she said. She had a round pink face and very gentle blue eyes. (Dahl)

Embed the quotation in the beginning of the sentence.

Embed the quotation in the middle of the sentence.

Embed the quotation at the end of the sentence.

Embed snippets from the quotation throughout a sentence.

Transitional expressions show relationships between thoughts and give a sense of direction and continuity. Consequently, they assist the reader in moving from detail to detail within a single sentence, from sentence to sentence, and lastly, from paragraph to paragraph. They are a necessary factor in coherence, especially regarding essays. Hoping these tables assist you with your future writing successes.

Addition	Comparison	Contrast	Emphasis	Example	Exception
in addition	similarly	however	certainly	for example	yet
moreover	likewise	nevertheless	in any event	for instance	still
further	in like manner	on the other hand	in fact	in this case	however
furthermore	whereas	but	indeed	in another case	nevertheless
finally	except	yet	extremely	on this occasion	naturally
first	by comparison	after all	perennially	in this situation	despite/in spite of
second	compared to	on the contrary	eternally	evidence of this	of course
in the third place	balanced against	notwithstanding	empathetically	proof of this	once in a while
once again	where	in contrast		thus	sometime
also	in the same way			in this manner	granted
besides that					
additionally					
Opening/General	Place	Proof	Result	Sequence	Time
admittedly	near	for the same reason	accordingly	first/second/third	at once
assuredly	beyond	evidently	thus	preceding this	immediately
certainly	opposite to	furthermore	consequently	concurrently	meanwhile
granted	adjacent to	moreover	hence	following	at length
no doubt	at the same place	besides	therefore	at this time/point	in the meantime
nobody denies	here/there	indeed	wherefore	subsequently	at the same time
obviously		in fact	thereupon	afterward	simultaneously
of course		in addition	truly then	after/before this	in the end
to be sure		because	in final consideration	previously	then
truly		clearly then	in final analysis	soon/as soon as	at last
undoubtedly		in light of this	indeed	finally	at first
unquestionably		it is easy to see that	in conclusion	before/before long	in the first place
generally speaking			finally	next	later
in general			lastly		
at this level					
in this situation					

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Fallacies are defects that weaken arguments. By learning to look for them in your own and others' writing, you can strengthen your ability to evaluate the arguments you make, read, and hear. Fallacies are very, very common, and can be quite persuasive, at least to the casual reader or listener. You can find dozens of examples of fallacies in newspapers, advertisements, and other sources. To write a convincing argument, try to avoid the following pitfalls in logical thinking.

Term	Definition
Hasty Generalizations	Arriving at a conclusion without enough evidence. Stereotypes about people (Asian-American students are better in math. French people are more romantic. Frat boys are drunkards. Grad students are nerdy, etc.). Example: <i>My roommate said her Philosophy class was hard, and the one I'm in is hard, too. All Philosophy classes must be hard!</i>
Circular Reasoning	Restating in different words what has already been stated. Example: <i>Dieting is hard because consuming fewer calories is hard.</i>
Post Hoc/False Cause	Assuming that because B comes after A, A caused B. Examples: <i>When I sat down at the computer it stopped working, so I must have done something wrong.</i> <i>President Jones raised taxes, and then the rate of violent crime went up. Jones is responsible for the rise in violent crime.</i>
Slippery Slope	Assumes a chain of cause-effect relationships with very suspect connections. Example: <i>Because I failed my exam, my parents were mad, I lost my wallet, my car wouldn't start, and I got fired.</i>
Non Sequitur	The first part of the idea does not relate to the other. Example: <i>I did well in school because I always wore nice clothes.</i>
False Dichotomy	Suggesting only two alternatives when the issue may have many alternatives. Example: <i>"Caldwell Hall is in bad shape. Either we tear it down and put up a new building, or we continue to risk students' safety. Obviously we shouldn't risk anyone's safety, so we must tear the building down."</i> The argument neglects to mention the possibility that we might repair the building.
False Authority	Draws attention away from the evidence and leans on the popularity of someone who may have little knowledge of the issue or product. Example: <i>"We should abolish the death penalty. Many respected people, such as actor Guy Handsome, have publicly stated their opposition to it."</i> While Guy Handsome may be an authority on matters having to do with acting, there's no particular reason why anyone should be moved by his political opinions—he is probably no more of an authority on the death penalty than the person writing the paper.
Ad Hominem ("against the person")	Attacking the person instead of the idea. Example: <i>Don't vote for Jerry Brown; he's a left-wing fanatic, a throwback to the 60s who meditates and eats health foods.</i>
Ad Populum ("to the people")	Claiming that most people agree so it must be right. Example: <i>"Canada should change its immigration policies. 70% of Canadians think so!"</i> The arguer is trying to get us to agree with the conclusion by appealing to our desire to fit in with other Canadians.
Tu Quoque ("you too!")	Attacking the person instead of the idea because the person has actually done the thing he or she is arguing against, so the arguments shouldn't be listened to. Example: <i>"Johnny's parents have explained to him why he shouldn't smoke, mentioning the damage to his health, the cost, and so forth. Johnny replies that he won't accept their argument because they used to smoke."</i> The fact that his parents have done the thing they are condemning has no bearing on the premises they put forward in their argument (smoking harms your health and is very expensive).
Appeal to Pity	When an arguer tries to get people to accept a conclusion by evoking pity for someone. Example: <i>"It's wrong to tax corporations—think of all the money they give to charity, and of the costs they already pay to run their businesses!"</i>
Appeal to Ignorance	Arguing that because there is no conclusive evidence on an issue, the arguer's conclusion should be accepted. Example: <i>"There has been no research conducted on pregnant women taking allergy medicine, and there have been no negative side effects shown in pregnant women. Therefore, it is safe for pregnant women to take allergy medicine."</i>
Weak Analogy	When arguments rely on an analogy comparing two things that aren't really alike in the relevant aspects. Example: <i>"Guns are like hammers—they're both tools with metal parts that could be used to kill someone. And yet it would be ridiculous to restrict the purchase of hammers—so restrictions on purchasing guns are equally ridiculous."</i>

Term	Definition
Missing the Point	The premises of an argument do support a particular conclusion—but not the conclusion that the arguer actually draws. Example: <i>“The seriousness of a punishment should match the seriousness of the crime. Right now, the punishment for drunk driving may simply be a fine. But drunk driving is a very serious crime that can kill innocent people. So the death penalty should be the punishment for drunk driving.”</i> The argument actually supports several conclusions— <i>“The punishment for drunk driving should be very serious,”</i> in particular—but it doesn’t support the claim that the death penalty, specifically, is warranted.
Red Herring	Partway through an argument, the arguer goes off on a tangent, raising a side issue that distracts the audience from the main argument. Often, the arguer never returns to the original issue. Example: <i>“The criminal won’t say where he was on the night of the crime, but he does remember being teased relentlessly as a child.”</i>
Equivocation	Sliding between two or more different meanings of a single word or phrase that is important to the argument. Example: <i>“Giving money to charity is the right thing to do. So charities have a right to our money.”</i> The equivocation here is on the word “right”: “right” can mean both something that is correct or good (as in “I got the right answers on the test”) and something to which someone has a claim (as in “everyone has a right to life”).
Stacking the Deck	Giving a slanted view of the issue by focusing only on one side. Example: I deserve to get an A in the class because I like the teacher, work hard, and attend class.

How Do I Find Fallacies In My Own Writing?

- Pretend you disagree with the conclusion you’re defending. What parts of the argument would now seem fishy to you? What parts would seem easiest to attack? Give special attention to strengthening those parts.
- List your main points; under each one, list the evidence you have for it. Seeing your claims and evidence laid out this way may make you realize that you have no good evidence for a particular claim, or it may help you look more critically at the evidence you’re using.
- Learn which types of fallacies you’re especially prone to, and be careful to check for them in your work. Some writers make lots of appeals to authority; others are more likely to rely on weak analogies or set up straw men. Read over some of your old papers to see if there’s a particular kind of fallacy you need to watch out for.
- Be aware that broad claims need more proof than narrow ones. Claims that use sweeping words like “all,” “no,” “none,” “every,” “always,” “never,” “no one,” and “everyone” are sometimes appropriate—but they require a lot more proof than less-sweeping claims that use words like “some,” “many,” “few,” “sometimes,” “usually,” and so forth.
- Double check your characterizations of others, especially your opponents, to be sure they are accurate and fair.

Reminders for Academic Writing:

- Formal Language, No Contractions, Third Person, Present Tense
- Use logical arguments, not emotional or plot-based arguments

Outline is to be a maximum of two (2) typed pages. Use the MLA heading and page number format. Follow the exact formatting, headings, and spacing, as demonstrated in the template below.

Topic: the subject matter dealt with in the essay (e.g., conflict developing character); You may be able to develop this into a creative title for the essay.

Novel & Author: use proper MLA title format

Introduction

Hook: general statements on the topic (see “Introductory Techniques • The Hook”); no questions!

Thesis: specific statement; must be a clear, arguable, relevant statement (c.a.r.s.) based on your topic.

Body Paragraphs (BP)

Argument 1: topic sentence is based on an aspect or subtopic; must also be c.a.r.s., support the thesis, and be worded differently than in introduction paragraph.

Example 1: as an embedded quotation. Embedding provides the context for the quotation and necessitates using a snippet of text from another source. Include MLA citation.

Explanation: explaining how this example relates to the topic sentence and why it is significant to the thesis.

Example 2: as an embedded quotation. Embedding provides the context. Include MLA citation.

Explanation: explaining how this example relates to the topic sentence and why it is significant to the thesis.

Example 3: as an embedded quotation. Embedding provides the context. Include MLA citation.

Explanation: explaining how this example relates to the topic sentence and why it is significant to the thesis.

BP2

Argument 2: Repeat format, headings, and spacing as demonstrated above in Body Paragraph 1.

BP3

Argument 3: Repeat format, headings, and spacing as demonstrated above in Body Paragraph 1.

Conclusion

Thesis: restate in different words

Argument 1: restate in different words

Argument 2: restate in different words

Argument 3: restate in different words

Synthesis: Explain how and why the topic sentences support your thesis

Commentary: End with an insightful, thought-provoking comment that links your thesis with a broader issue.

Reminders for Academic Writing:

- Formal Language, No Contractions, Third Person, Present Tense
- Use logical arguments, not emotional or plot-based arguments

Outline is to be a maximum of two (2) typed pages. Use the MLA heading and page number format. Follow the exact formatting, headings, and spacing, as demonstrated in the template below.

Topic:

INTRODUCTION

Hook:

Specific statement (thesis):

Body

1st main point (as a statement)

Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:

2nd main point (as a statement)

Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:

3rd main point (as a statement)

Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:

CONCLUSION: Restate thesis in different words and add a thought-provoking idea.

MLA entry for Works Cited page for each piece of literature:

1. _____

Thesis Statement:

Topic: _____

Purpose: _____

Working Thesis statement:

Aspect #1: _____

Explanation (in point form) - what is this aspect and how does this aspect support the purpose of your thesis?	Support (in the form of direct or indirect quotations for each point in your explanation). Be sure to include references (i.e., page numbers or act, scene, and line numbers).

Aspect #2: _____

Explanation (in point form) - what is this aspect and how does this aspect support the purpose of your thesis?	Support (in the form of direct or indirect quotations for each point in your explanation). Be sure to include references (i.e., page numbers or act, scene, and line numbers).

Aspect #3: _____

Explanation (in point form) - what is this aspect and how does this aspect support the purpose of your thesis?	Support (in the form of direct or indirect quotations for each point in your explanation). Be sure to include references (i.e., page numbers or act, scene, and line numbers).

Name of Assessor: _____

Category	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaches Standards	1 - Below Standards	Score
Hook	The introductory paragraph has a strong hook.	The introductory paragraph has a hook.	The introductory paragraph has an irrelevant hook. Improvement is necessary.	The introductory paragraph is not interesting AND is not relevant to the topic.	
Thesis Statement	The thesis statement is very clearly identified.	The thesis statement is identified.	The thesis statement is somewhat identified.	The thesis statement is not identified.	
Arguments	There are 3 strong and valid arguments.	Includes 3 arguments that could be more clearly stated.	There are 1-2 arguments that are somewhat valid. 3 valid arguments are needed.	Arguments are not clearly stated and improvement is necessary.	
Evidence & Examples	All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.	
Sequencing	A/B format is well developed Arguments and support are provided in a logical order that makes it easy and interesting to follow the author's train of thought.	A/B format is consistent. Arguments and support are provided in a fairly logical order that makes it reasonably easy to follow the author's train of thought.	A/B format is inconsistent. A few of the support details or arguments are not in an expected or logical order, distracting the reader and making the essay seem a little confusing.	Not structured in A/B format. Many of the support details or arguments are not in an expected or logical order, distracting the reader and making the essay seem very confusing.	
Transitions	A variety of thoughtful transitions are used. They clearly show how ideas are connected.	Transitions show how ideas are connected, but there is little variety.	Some transitions work well, but some connections between ideas are fuzzy.	The transitions between ideas are unclear OR nonexistent.	
Closing Paragraph	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader solidly understanding the writer's position. Effective restatement of the position is evident and a thought-provoking comment is included.	The conclusion is recognizable. The author's position is somewhat restated and there is a thought-provoking statement.	The author's position is not clearly stated and there is no thought-provoking comment.	There is no conclusion—the paper just ends.	
Sources	All sources used for quotes, statistics and facts are credible and cited correctly. Works Cited includes at least 2 sources and is formatted correctly	All sources used for quotes, statistics and facts are credible and most are cited correctly. Works Cited includes at least 2 sources and is mostly correct	Most sources used for quotes, statistics and facts are credible and cited correctly. Works Cited includes less than 2 sources	Many sources are suspect (not credible) AND/OR are not cited correctly. Be careful to avoid plagiarism. Works Cited is incorrect or absent	
Sentence Structure	All sentences are well-constructed with varied structure.	Most sentences are well-constructed and there is some varied sentence structure in the essay.	Most sentences are well-constructed, but there is no variation in structure.	Most sentences are not well-constructed or varied.	
Grammar & Spelling	Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	
Capitalization & Punctuation	Author makes no errors in capitalization or punctuation, so the essay is exceptionally easy to read.	Author makes 1-2 errors in capitalization or punctuation, but the essay is still easy to read.	Author makes 3-4 errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader's attention and interrupt the flow.	Author makes several errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader's attention and interrupt the flow.	
Overall Impression	Essay is excellent but still may need a couple of improvements.	Essay is good but needs a few minor improvements.	Essay is okay but needs some improvements.	Essay needs a lot of improvements.	

Staple and submit this sheet with your completed assignment.

	1 Topic Development Overall effect of paper	2 Support Degree to which the response includes examples that develop the main points/proper citing.	3 Organization Degree to which the response is focused, clear, and in a logical order/formatting/process work.	4 Sentence Structure Degree of inclusion of complete & correct sentences, varied in structure & length.	5 Word Choice Vocabulary, word choice, usage	6 Mechanics Spelling & capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear focus. Original, insightful, or imaginative. Compelling thesis. Clearly aware of task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting details are rich, interesting & full. Details are relevant and appropriate for the audience and focus. All citing is correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carefully but subtly organized from beginning to end. Transitional devices are subordinate to meaning. Works Cited is correct. MLA format is correct. Process work is complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence variety enhances style and effect. Successful use of more sophisticated sentence patterns. Embedded quotations enhance flow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich, effective vocabulary. Correct usage. Strong authoritative voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few or no mechanical errors, with complexity.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluent fully developed. Clear awareness of audience and task. Solid. Clear thesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details are strong, but lack richness and specificity. Most citing is correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized from beginning to end. Logical order. Generally successful in using transitions. Works Cited is mostly correct. MLA format is mostly complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence variety is appropriate. Few errors. Moderately successful in using more sophisticated patterns. Embedded quotations are used correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective vocabulary. Generally correct usage. Authoritative voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few or no mechanical errors relative to the length or complexity.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderately fluent. Ideas developed, but limited in depth. Thesis is identifiable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details are adequate to support the focus. Details are generally relevant and appropriate for audience and focus. Some citing is correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized, but may have minor lapses in order or structure. Focused. Some transitions. Works Cited is generally correct. MLA format is generally correct. Process work is generally complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some sentence variety. Some errors in usage. Attempts to use more sophisticated sentence patterns. Embedded quotations are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptable vocabulary. Attempts to use rich language. Generally correct usage. Some authoritative voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some errors that do not interfere with communication. Limited text, but mechanically correct.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinly developed. Poor awareness of audience and task. Repetitive or too general. Thesis is somewhat identifiable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details lack elaboration. Some details do not support the focus. Important details are omitted. Minimal citing is correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus is unclear or limited. Poor transitions. Lacks closure. Chaining. Works Cited is somewhat correct. MLA format is somewhat correct. Process work is somewhat complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little sentence variety. Errors in usage that interfere with meaning. Over-reliance on simple or repetitive sentences. Errors with embedded quotations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplistic vocabulary with limited word choices. Noticeable errors in usage. Limited authoritative voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some errors that do interfere with communication. Errors are disproportionate to length or complexity. Minor problems for reader.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly developed. Poor awareness of audience or task. Lacks clarity. Thesis is poorly identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details are merely listed. Repetitive details. Too few details. Very little citing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfocused. Thought patterns are difficult to follow. Resembles freewriting. Lacks closure. No transitions. Multiple errors in Works Cited. Very little MLA formatting. Little evidence of process work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sentence variety. Serious errors in usage. Too brief to demonstrate variety. Numerous errors with embedded quotations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplistic vocabulary with inappropriate and/or incorrect word choice. Numerous errors in usage. Lacks authoritative voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noticeable errors that do interfere with communication. Errors cause major problems for reader.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not developed. No awareness of audience or task. Inappropriate response. Thesis is not identifiable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtually no details. Irrelevant details. No citing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So short or muddled that it lacks organization or focus. No transitions. No Works Cited. No MLA formatting. No process work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of sentence sense. Riddled with errors. Too brief to evaluate. No embedded quotations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate vocabulary. Too brief to evaluate. Lacks authoritative voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Errors that seriously interfere with communication. Too brief to evaluate.
Total	T= /6	S= /6	O= /6	SS= /6	WC= /6	M= /6

Overall Expectations: Developing and Organizing Content: generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience; **Using Knowledge of Form and Style:** draft and revise their writing, using a variety of literary, informational, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience; **Applying Knowledge of Conventions:** use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively.