
Making Sense of Essays

A guide by Ms. Gray

What is an Essay

- A form of factual writing
- More than one paragraph
- Can be formal or freely written
- Present specific information
- Includes writer's personal feelings





What's the point?

There are three basic reasons to write an essay

- **Present Information**
You inform readers about something new or important
- **Share a Strong Opinion**
Convince readers to agree or disagree with your way of thinking
- **To Make you Think**
Share your personal thoughts and entertain your readers

The Different Types of Essays

Type of Essay:	Reason for It:
Descriptive Essay	(Describing one event)
Research Essay	(Presenting factual information)
Literature Essay	(Responding to a story)
Persuasive Essay	(Convincing someone)
Expository Essay	(Explaining something)

The four Main Steps

1. Prewriting - Getting Started
 2. Prewriting- Collecting and Organizing
 3. Writing the first draft
 4. Revising and Editing
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– Step one: Getting Started

Prewriting is discovering
your subject, audience, and
voice.

Subject

Ask yourself:

- Who or what am I writing about?
- Does this subject interest me?
- Do I already know some things about my subject?



Tip

Remember, it is okay to change your subject. This is why we pre write. Find what a subject you are passionate about and if you change your mind that's okay. Just keep in mind of the deadline.

Audience

Ask yourself:

- Who is reading my essay?

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Voice

Ask yourself:

- How do I want my reading to sound?
- Am I being serious, funny, or somewhere in between?



Step 2: Collecting and Organizing

- Write down everything you know about your subject
- Look at your writing and focus on parts you want to write about.
- Gather more information about your subject
- Decide what details you are going to include and how they will be organized

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Step 3: Writing the First Draft

Each part of an essay
plays a special role

Every essay has three parts

The Beginning

The first paragraph grabs the reader's attention right away. It also states clearly the subject or topic of your essay.

The Middle

The middle includes all the ideas that explains the subject or topic. You use facts, figures, and examples to express your ideas in a clear manner.

The End

The very last paragraphs summarizes the main points you talked about in your essay. You remind readers why the subject is important.

Step 4: Revising and Editing

Follow this checklist to help
improve your work

- ❖ Have I written a title that helps identify my subject?
- ❖ Have I introduced my subject in an effective way?
- ❖ Have I included enough facts and details to support my subject?
- ❖ Will readers understand why my subject is important or interesting?
- ❖ Do I like the sound of my words and sentences?
- ❖ Have I check for errors?

What you wanted to know

Why do essays get longer as you get older?

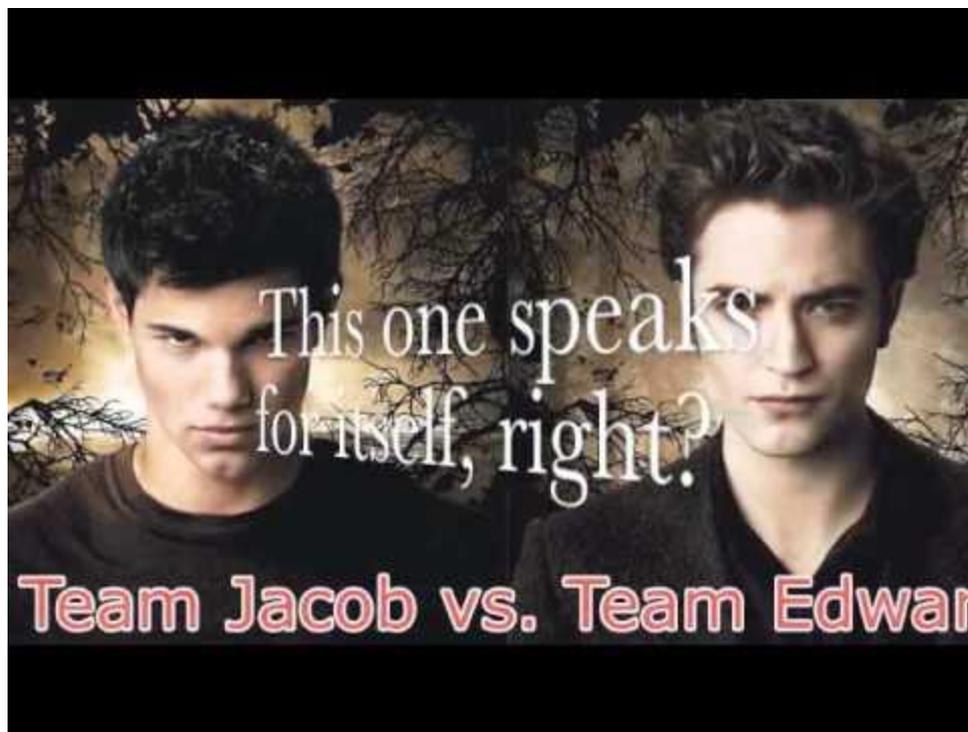
How long does an essay have to be?

When do you start writing a lot of essays?

Do you only write essays at school?

How long does writing an essay take?

How are essays graded?



Prewriting: Getting Started

On a piece of paper answer the following questions:

1. What do I want to write about? With a partner and an Ipad create a list of 7-10 topics you could or would like to write about.
 2. Who is my audience? What can I do to entertain my readers?
 3. What voice will I use in my essay?
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Selecting a Subject

Basics of Life Check List

- Animals
 - art/music
 - Books
 - Clothing
 - Community
 - Education
 - Environment
 - Exercise
 - Faith
 - Family
 - Food
 - Freedom
 - Friends
 - Health
 - Housing
 - Laws
 - Money
 - Plants
 - science/technology
 - Travel
 - Work/play
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Starting Points: Persuading

- Something that needs improving
 - Something that is unfair
 - Something everyone should see or do
 - Something worth supporting
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Organizing your Essay

To help organize the supporting facts and details in your essay, try *listing*, *clustering*, or *outlining*.

Listing is when you make a list of the supporting details in the order you want to write about them .

Clustering is when you use a word web to organize your ideas.

Outlining is when you arrange your ideas from general to specific.

Introduction

The most important paragraph in
your essay

1. Read the sample.
 2. Answer the following questions:
 - a. Identify the hook.
 - b. Identify the topic sentence.
 - c. What are the main ideas.
 - d. What side of the argument does the write stand on?
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Example

Tired, crabby, or unfocused in class? It could be the food you are eating. The lack of healthy and tasty school lunch selections has recently become a problem in almost every elementary, middle and high school across the nation. Most schools sell junk food to students and I think this is wrong. There are many good reasons to remove junk food from school lunch menus, and creating a healthier student body is number one. Junk foods should be taken out of school lunch menus because they affect your body and mind in negative ways.

Example

What would you think if you had to put your personal belongings in a crate, and every time you turn around something of yours were stolen? That is why I think students should have lockers. To protect their things, keep their things somewhere clean, and so they won't have to complain about carrying everything at once.

Thesis Statement

A thesis is a clearly worded statement telling readers exactly what the writer intends to do in the essay.

Road Map: The preview of the 3 points

The preview briefly states the main points that will be argued in the essay.

The preview merely summarizes each point in as few words as possible.

Example

My essay will argue square, circle, and triangle .
My first body paragraph should be about squares, my second should be about circles, and my third should be about triangles.

Body Paragraphs

The term body refers to all paragraphs after the introduction and before the conclusion.

There are three body paragraphs in a five paragraph persuasive essay.

Each body paragraph should focus on one argument, called the main point.

The Main Point

A main point is the purpose of the body paragraph.

Each body paragraph should have one clearly stated main point that is expressed in the topic sentence of the paragraph

A five-paragraph persuasive essay has three main points and each main points supports the thesis of the essay.

Topic Sentences

Topic sentences clearly state the purpose of the paragraph.

Each body paragraph should begin with a topic sentence.

Should state the paragraph's central argument.

Example

*Students should not have to wear school uniforms because **they limit students' ability to express their individuality.***

Write topic sentences that are clear, direct, and upfront about your purpose.

Supporting Details

Supporting details are arguments, examples, or descriptions that justify, explain, and develop main points.

Persuasive Essay Thought Stems

- What I mean by this is...
 - Another way to say this is...
 - This connects to my argument because...
 - The reason for this is that...
 - To put it another way...
 - This shows that...
 - This is important because...
 - For example...
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Ending your Body Paragraph

last sentence in a body paragraph connects the support back to the main point.

Example

We should not have to wear school uniforms because they limit our ability to express our individuality. What I mean by this is that students have the right to express who they are and how they are feeling. One of the most important ways they do this is through dress. This is how we show the world who we are, particularly in an environment where we are forced to be quiet for 90% of the day. Our fashion makes a unique statement. If students are forced to wear uniforms, their ability to express themselves will be severely limited. Schools should promote student expression not restrict it. Because of this we should not have to wear uniforms.

Concluding Paragraphs

The conclusion is the last paragraph in the persuasive essay.

-restate the thesis and main points of the essay

-then attempt to leave a strong impression on the reader by ending on a [clinching statement](#).

Restatement of Points

is when the writer briefly reviews the main points of their argument.

Similar to the preview (Road Map) but do not repeat it word for word.

Clinching Statements

The clinching statement is the last idea in the persuasive essay.

-final opportunity to leave an impression

The Better World

The writer attempts to describe an idyllic scenario that will occur if their proposal is accepted. The sun will shine brighter and the sky will be bluer if the writer's resolution is adopted, so to speak.

Example: If students aren't forced to wear uniforms, our school will have a much more pleasant and productive environment in which everyone will learn and grow.

The Worst Case Scenario

The writer describes a scenario, this time imagining how bad the world might become if their proposal is rejected.

Example: *If students are required to wear uniforms, the environment of our school will become drab and colorless, and the structure of our hallowed institution will be further from a college and closer to a prison.*

The Call to Action

Ask or demand that your reader take *some* action in support of your proposal.

If you understand how important it is for students to have the right to dress themselves, it is your civic duty to attend your local school counsel meeting and demand that this proposal be rejected.
