

Expository Writing Components

Topic Sentence

A topic sentence consists of a **subject** and an **opinion** that **supports the thesis**.

Body Paragraphs

A body paragraph has these elements:

- **Topic sentence:** A sentence that has a subject and an opinion that works directly to support the thesis.
- **Transitions:** Words or phrases used to connect ideas (for example, for instance).
- **Supporting information:** Specific facts and details that are appropriate for the topic and are relevant and come from a variety of sources. Extraneous details should not be included, and the supporting information should not have inconsistencies.
- **Commentary:** Sentences that explain how the information is relevant to the thesis/topic sentence and bring a sense of closure to the paragraph.

Introduction

- **A hook/lead:** Question, Quote, Anecdote, or Statement of Intrigue (QQAS) that is related to the topic. If you ask a question, answer it; if you use a quote, analyze it; if you use an anecdote or statement of intrigue, explain it.
- **A connection between the QQAS and the thesis** using a TAG (title, author, genre) statement (e.g., Rooney's persuasive essay, "America the Not-So-Beautiful," explains....).
- **Thesis statement** describing a subject and an opinion.

Conclusion

Concluding paragraphs bring a sense of closure to the essay by examining insights presented in the text and analyzing the larger meaning of those ideas. Use the following levels of questions to guide your thinking in crafting a conclusion:

- **What did you say?** (Literal)
- **What does it mean?** (Interpretive)
- **Why does it matter?** (Universal)

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Rhetorical Devices

Rhetorical devices show ideas in interesting ways and help your ideas have a lasting effect on your reader. Examples of rhetorical devices are parallelism, analogy, and rhetorical questions. Incorporate rhetorical devices in the class essay.

Parallelism

Parallelism is using the same structure for similar parts of a sentence. Use parallelism to add balance, rhythm, and clarity to a sentence. Examples: I stand here today, grateful for clean air to breathe, humbled by enough food to eat, and thankful for fresh water to drink. (parallel adjectives)

The ecologist's briefcase held three environmentally friendly notebooks, two biodegradable writing utensils, and one recyclable water bottle. (parallel objects)

Analogy

An analogy compares two things and expresses the relationship between them. Use an analogy to explain or clarify an idea or object.

Example: My need to recycle is like my need for food and water.

Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is one for which the writer expects no reply, or the writer clearly directs the reader to one desired reply. Use rhetorical questions to emphasize an idea or to draw a conclusion from the facts. A rhetorical question may help remind your reader of a main point.

Example: Is that truly what we want for the environment? How can these facts lie?

Transitions

A coherent essay is one that presents ideas that tie together and flow smoothly, making the essay easy to follow for the reader. Two ways to revise for coherence are to use transitional words within and between paragraphs and to use varied sentence structures.

- Transitions to show examples: for example, for instance, such as, in other words
- Transitions to show importance: more importantly, most important, most of all, least, last but not least
- Transitions to show comparison and contrast: similarly, on the other hand, in contrast, different from, like, unlike, same as, in the same way, nevertheless, likewise, by contrast, conversely

Varied Sentence Structure

Use a mix of sentence types to add interest to your writing.

- A **simple sentence** contains one independent clause. Example: The singer bowed to her adoring audience.
- A **compound sentence** contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) or a semicolon (a mark that indicates a pause between two complete thoughts). Example: The singer bowed to the audience, but she sang no encores.
- A **complex sentence** contains an independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses. Example: Because the singer was tired, she went straight to bed after the concert.