

WRITING AN ESSAY

Getting started means getting organized:

STEP ONE: ANALYZE THE ASSIGNMENT & DETERMINE WHAT IS REQUIRED

With a highlighter, note important words that define the topic.

Then organize your plan

For example, you have been given this writing prompt:

You have a present that was really memorable. It could have been given for an important occasion or just for no reason at all. Tell us about the present and why it was memorable. Include the reason it was given, a description of it, and how you felt when you got it.

The objective is to write a narrative essay about this present you were given

STEP TWO: IDENTIFY THE SUBJECT—memorable present

& MAIN TOPICS:

- the reason it was given
- a description of it
- and how you felt when you got it

STEP THREE: OUTLINE your five paragraph essay; include these elements:

Introductory Paragraph

General Topic Sentence: **memorable present**

1. Subtopic One: **the reason it was given**
2. Subtopic Two: **a description of it**
3. Subtopic Three: **how you felt when you got it**
4. (Transition)

First Supporting Paragraph

1. Restate Subtopic One
2. Supporting Details or Examples
3. (Transition)

Second Supporting Paragraph

1. Restate Subtopic Two
2. Supporting Details or Examples
3. (Transition)

Third Supporting Paragraph

1. Restate Subtopic Three
2. Supporting Details or Examples
3. (Transition)

Closing or Summary Paragraph

1. Synthesis* and conclusion of the thesis
2. Rephrasing main topic and subtopics.

*Synthesis- How do the subtopics relate to one another? What does it all mean?

STEP FOUR: WRITE the essay!

Think small; build the full essay gradually.

Divide your essay into sections and develop each piece separately and incrementally.

The Introductory Paragraph

- **The opening paragraph sets the tone.** It not only introduces the topic, but where you are going with it (the thesis). If you do a good job in the opening, you will draw your reader into your "experience." Put effort up front, and you will reap rewards.
- **Write in the active voice.** It is much more powerful. Do that for each sentence in the introductory essay. Unless you are writing a personal narrative, do not use the pronoun "I."
- **Varying sentence structure.** Review to avoid the same dull pattern of always starting with the subject of the sentence.

- **Brainstorm to find the best supporting ideas.** The best supporting ideas are the ones about which you have some knowledge. If you do not know about them, you cannot do a good job writing about them. Don't weaken the essay with ineffective argument.
- **Practice writing introductory paragraphs on various topics.** Even if you do not use them, they can be compared with the type of writing you are doing now. It is rewarding to see a pattern of progress.

Supporting Paragraphs

- **Write a transition to establish the sub-topic**
Each paragraph has to flow, one to the next.
- **Write the topic sentence**
The transition can be included in the topic sentence.
- **Supporting ideas, examples, details must be specific** to the sub-topic
The tendency in supporting paragraphs is to put in just about anything.
Avoid this: the work you have made above with details and examples will help you keep focused.
- **Vary sentence structure**
Avoid repetitious pronouns and lists
Avoid beginning sentences the same way (subject + verb + direct object).

The Ending or Summary Paragraph

This is a difficult paragraph to write effectively.

You cannot assume that the reader sees your point

- **Restate the introductory thesis/paragraph** with originality
Do not simply copy the first paragraph
- **Summarize your argument** with some degree of authority
this paragraph should leave your reader with no doubt as to your position or conclusion of logic
- **Be powerful** as this is the last thought that you are leaving with the reader.

STEP FIVE: EDIT & REVISE your essay

Check your spelling and grammar

Subjects and verbs agree, and verb tenses are consistent

Examine your whole essay for logic

Thought builds and flows?

Avoid gaps in logic, or too much detail.

Review individual sentences

- **Use active verbs to be more descriptive**
Avoid passive constructions and the verb "to be"
- **Use transitional words and phrases**
Avoid sentences beginning with pronouns, constructions as "There are....,"
Example: "There is a need to proofread all works" becomes "Proofreading is a must."
- **Be concise**
though vary the length and structure of sentences

Ask a knowledgeable friend to review and comment on your essay

and to repeat back what you are trying to say. You may be surprised.