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# Thinking and Writing

## A Guide to Paragraphs and Essays

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## **1. Introduction: Why Write?**

This guidebook is designed as an introduction to paragraph and essay writing for adults who are returning to school. For some, the guide may serve to refresh writing skills that have become rusty, while for others many concepts will be new. The guide leads you through the process of writing paragraphs and then essays. You will learn about different methods of organizing and developing your writing. And you will learn how to select an appropriate writing topic, generate ideas, develop a topic sentence or thesis statement, organize your thoughts, and edit and proofread your work. Sample student essays are included which demonstrate how many everyday topics can be crafted into effective paragraphs and essays.

Like any other skill, writing improves with instruction and practice. It's hard work, but gaining an understanding of writing techniques can help you avoid "writer's block" and help you become a confident and effective writer.

### ***Writing and Thinking***

Writing is a way of thinking about the world around us. As we experience the events in our lives we rarely respond to them in a formal way. Writing about events requires you to think carefully about your experiences and to organize and express your thoughts in a way that others can understand and find value in. As you write, it is important to consider why you are writing (your purpose) and who might be interested in reading your writing (your audience).

Today, as we have come to rely more and more on computers, we are finding new demands on our writing. The Internet has created a whole new era of written communication. Millions of people exchange messages on-line every day. The personal letter has been electronically resurrected in the form of e-mail. Business people, academics, scientists, fans and enthusiasts of every stripe use the internet to send and receive information. And the ability to write clearly is essential for academic success. Beyond the essays required for college courses, the ability to write clearly is recognized as an essential workplace skill.

## ***Writing with a Purpose***

Here are some of the main purposes for writing:

1. to **express** ourselves or our ideas to others. Diaries, journals, personal letters and e-mails are examples of this type of writing.
2. to **entertain** others by telling stories or by describing things.
3. to **explain** or **inform**. Writing that explains or informs is generally called **expository** writing. Much of the academic writing required for college courses is a form of expository writing which uses methods of development such as process (how to), compare and contrast, classification, division, cause and effect, definition, and illustration or example.
4. to **persuade**. Persuasive or argumentative writing is an attempt to convince your readers to accept or reject an opinion and/or to take action.

Before you begin writing consider your purpose and your audience. Would anyone other than your instructor be interested in reading your paragraph or essay? Why? Does your writing entertain, inform, or persuade? If you begin your writing with a clear sense of purpose, you will find it easier to stay on track and complete your writing assignments.

Approach developing your writing skills as you would developing any other skills. If you work regularly with a sense of purpose, you will experience steady improvement. Writing well involves many skills, so don't expect everything to happen at once. You wouldn't expect to be in great shape after three visits to the gym. You would probably have to work out for several weeks or months before you noticed much difference. Similarly with writing, your improvement will be gradual, but at a certain point you will recognize that you have improved.

## **2. Getting Started: Finding Ideas for Writing**

### ***Finding Ideas for Writing:***

Everyone learns in different ways. Part of becoming a successful writer is discovering what works best for you. To start writing, you need two things: 1) a clear idea of what you want to write about; 2) evidence to support that idea. Your writing will be more focused and more effective if you think not just about topics but about **ideas**. Writer Sheridan Baker likes to ask students about their writing, “What’s the big idea?” If your idea is clear and you can back up your idea you have the basis for a good essay or paragraph.

Your subject should be something that will interest your reader and that you feel you can say something about that reflects your unique experience and point of view. Avoid the obvious. Writing on a topic like the difference between the rich and the poor may lead to statements like, “The rich have more money than the poor”. Your reader is likely to say, “So what? That’s not exactly news”. However, if you were to approach this topic from a different angle such as how money affects a person’s outlook on life, you have a good starting point.

Often you will have a general sense that you want to write about a certain topic, but haven’t really decided what you want to say. Before you write, take some time to do some **brainstorming** to find some ideas. **Listing, clustering, questioning, freewriting,** and **talking** are all ways to generate ideas about your topic.

You may find that you like to make lists and begin working with a clear structure in mind before you start writing. Or you may prefer to freewrite, see what ideas you come up with, and then try to craft your ideas into a finished paragraph. There is no “right way” when it comes to writing. As you write more, you will discover which of the following techniques work best for you and make you most productive.

### **Freewriting**

Suppose you wanted to write a paragraph on the influence of TV on children. You might begin by freewriting about all the ways you can think of that TV influences children. Don’t worry if your ideas seem disconnected and fragmented. Just get down as many thoughts as you can and worry about organizing them later. Allow yourself ten minutes and then stop and see what you have. Look at this example:

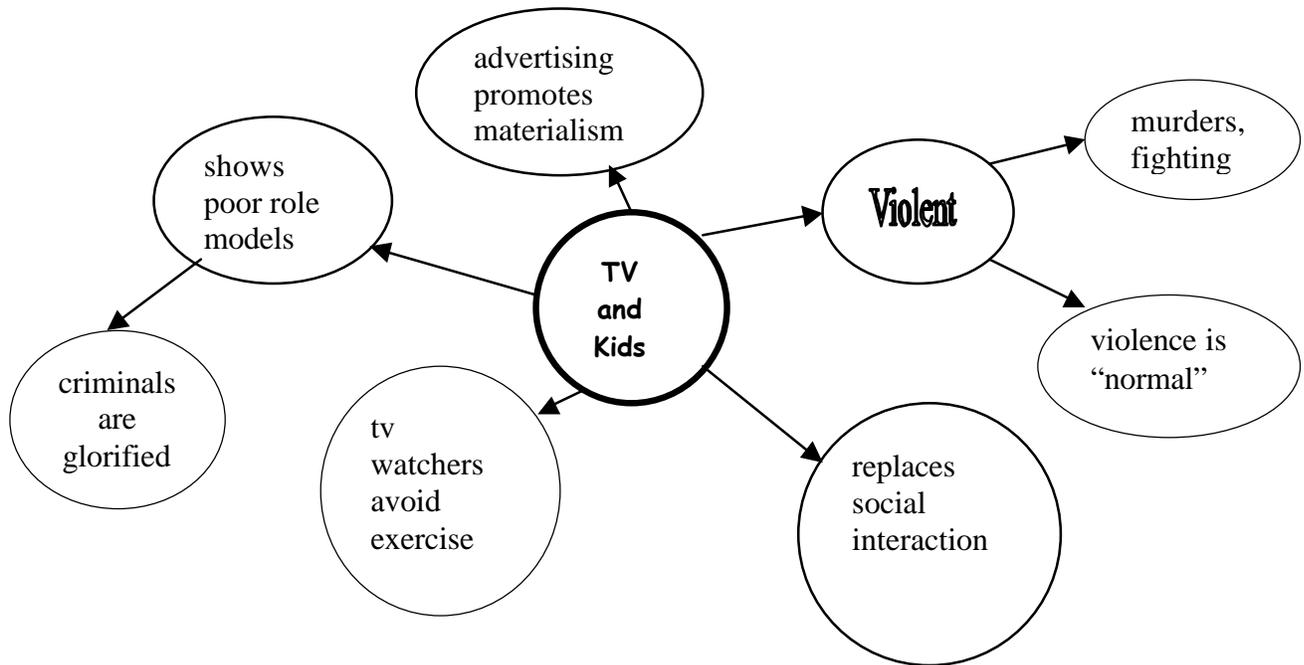
**Freewriting Example: TV and children**

Kids watch too much TV. Lots of commercials selling junk food. Nobody's real. Most shows are really stupid. Kids can sit and watch junk for hours. Kids get hooked and don't want to play with friends—rather watch TV. Lots of educational shows but the kids always prefer junk. Many shows are violent. Lots of murders and guns. Works great as a babysitter when you're tired and just don't want to deal with kids. Kids want to get everything that's on TV.

From your freewriting, you can generate enough ideas for a paragraph in a short time. Your next step is to look at the ideas in your freewriting and decide what you seem to be saying about your topic. In this example, most of the statements about TV are negative. Select these points and organize them into a list. See **Listing** below.

**Clustering or Mapping**

Clustering is another way to develop ideas for your writing. The clustering approach often reveals new and unexpected connections between ideas and allows you to see different themes and categories of thought. The technique is fairly simple: write your topic in a circle in the middle of the page and think of as many different aspects of this topic as you can. Continue on with ideas related to these new points until you feel you have enough ideas for your paragraph or essay. Then organize your ideas into lists or themes. Here's an example of clustering on the topic of T.V. and Kids:



## Listing

You may prefer to begin by listing and find you can come up with sufficient ideas for your writing in this way. Or you may find you prefer to free writing, idea clustering or some other way of gathering ideas such as talking with others, questioning or reading. If you are able to organize your ideas clearly as you write, you might do this stage mentally rather than as a written list. But most writers benefit from written notes or lists before they begin writing.

Here's an example of working from a list of ideas to develop a paragraph:

Your initial list might include these points:

- children learn to accept violent behaviour as normal
- encourages materialism
- presents unrealistic role models
- educational
- entertaining, helps pass time
- watching TV replaces physical exercise
- replaces social relationships

After looking at your list, you will probably see that there are more negative effects than positive ones. Your **topic sentence** will reflect this idea.

The paragraph below is based on the ideas from the list. (Of course this is a revised version, not the first draft) Some points have been eliminated and some have been combined into one sentence. The **topic sentence is in bold**, the supporting sentences are underlined, the *transitions are in italics*, and the **conclusion is in bold**. (For more on paragraphs, see the section on paragraph organization.)

### What Children Learn from TV

**Parents of young children should be aware of the strong negative influence watching too much TV has on children.** *First of all,* TV teaches children to accept violent behaviour as normal. Children may see hundreds of “murders” every year and soon treat them with little concern. *Secondly,* TV teaches children to be materialistic. This is not surprising given that TV supports itself by selling products. *Another* negative aspect of TV is that it presents unrealistic role models. Most children don't know the kinds of wealthy, carefree, beautiful people that are portrayed on the screen. *Finally,* children sometimes substitute TV for social and physical activities. TV watchers can become physically and socially “out of shape”. **It's easy to argue that TV is educational, but if you're really concerned about your kids, turn off that TV.**

## Questioning

Yet another way of coming up with ideas involves questioning yourself and your beliefs about a topic. Make a list of questions about your topic and try to come up with some answers. For example:

- Why does TV appeal so much to children?
- Is watching TV doing any long-term damage?
- How does seeing violence on TV affect children?
- How much TV should kids watch?
- What's the harm in watching TV if kids like it?
- Is TV making kids lazy?

You could go on until you run out of ideas. Your answers to these types of questions will reveal your view and provide a starting point for writing about this topic.

## Talking and Reading about Your Topic

Sometimes, after making lists or freewriting on your topic you may still feel you don't have a clear idea about what you want to say. If you are still convinced about the value of your topic, talk about it with a friend and see if you can come up with some new ideas or approach the subject from a new angle.

Reading about your subject can help you identify further ideas, and it can also give you the precise vocabulary necessary to discuss your topic effectively. Try to find a short magazine or newspaper article on your topic. Read through it carefully to find the main ideas and underline key words as you read. You can use these later in your own writing.

### 3. Elements of Writing

- **Content**
- **Organization (structure)**
- **Style (expression)**
- **Writing Mechanics (grammar and spelling)**

One way to look at a paragraph or an essay is to consider the different parts or elements that work together in an effective piece of writing: **content, structure, style, and writing mechanics**. If any of these is weak or poorly developed, your writing will be less effective.

Content is what you say in your essay; structure is how you organize your content. Style refers to such elements of writing as sentence variety, word usage, and tone—essentially **how** you express your ideas. Writing mechanics refers to the use of standard English grammar and spelling.

Let's look at these writing elements in greater detail.

#### **Content**

Content is the information you provide in your essay. When starting an essay, you should ask yourself what you really want to say about the subject. If you want to write something about cars, you have to decide what the purpose of your essay is. Is it to explain how to find a good used car? (**how to** or **process** essay) Do you want to present an argument about the effects of our dependence on cars? (**cause and effect**) Or you may want to point out the differences and similarities between two or three different cars as a way of determining which would be the best buy. (**compare and contrast**) You might choose to describe a favourite car (**description**) or tell a story about the first car you owned (**narrative**).

It takes time to develop content. You may have some prior knowledge of your subject or you may have to do some reading to fill in some gaps.

#### **Structure**

Structure is the way you organize your writing. A clearly organized piece of writing is easy for readers to follow. There are some basics to organizing your writing. Paragraphs should have clear topic sentences and supporting points. Essays need a clear **thesis** and enough evidence to make a good case for the thesis. The essay model shown in this booklet is commonly called the three-point essay, but many forms are possible. Essays can run into many paragraphs, but they will all maintain the same basic organization pattern: an **introduction** in which the **thesis** is presented; **supporting paragraphs** which provide evidence to back up the thesis; and a **concluding paragraph** which looks back to the thesis and sums up or acknowledges the points that have been made in the essay.

## **Style**

Once you have figured out what you want to say and how to organize it, you have to decide how to say it. Style involves the choice of words, tone and the arrangement of phrases and sentences that give each writer a unique “voice”. While the content may attract us to a piece of writing, it is the writer’s style that keeps us reading. As you develop as a writer, your own personal style will emerge and you will find a distinct voice.

## **Writing Mechanics**

Writing mechanics refers to the correct use of grammar and spelling. As you build your ability to generate ideas and develop them into paragraphs and essays, you will have to edit your writing for punctuation and sentence structure according to the rules of standard English grammar.

## 4. Paragraphs

### What is a paragraph?

**A paragraph can be defined a short piece of writing about a single topic.**

A paragraph is made up of three sections:

1. **Topic Sentence:** states the topic and your view about the topic.
2. **Supporting Sentences:** provide support for your topic sentences.
3. **Concluding Sentence:** brings the paragraph to a close

Keep in mind that a paragraph is about a single topic. Paragraphs can stand on their own, or a number of paragraphs can be connected to develop an essay.

There is no fixed length for a paragraph, but in order to develop sufficient support for your topic sentence, you will generally have to write between five and ten sentences.

Here's a sample paragraph:

### The Keys to Physical Fitness

Many people are unrealistic about what it takes to become physically fit. They try fad diets, infomercial exercise programs and miracle fat burning supplements without success while ignoring the real steps to fitness. The first step is strength training. Strength training builds muscle which helps increase energy levels and improve posture. In addition to building muscle strength through strength training, regular cardiovascular exercise such as running, walking or cycling is essential. Cardiovascular training burns fat and strengthens the heart. But regular exercise will only be effective if people pay attention to diet and nutrition. A diet that avoids sugars, junk foods, and high fat meals and is high in fruits, grains and low fat meats will provide the body with the energy it needs without weight gain. As much as we might wish it, the "secret" of physical fitness can't be found in a bottle. It's a matter of regular exercise and good eating habits.

Note that the writer expresses a view point on physical fitness—that many people have unrealistic ideas about how to become fit. The rest of the paragraph goes on to explain the only realistic way to become physically fit.

The **topic sentence** is more than just a factual statement about your topic. It also should contain your view or your particular slant on the topic. For example: **Many teenagers play video games** is simply a statement of fact and brings nothing new, interesting or controversial to the subject. A topic sentence such as **Teenagers learn many important skills by playing video games**, however, makes a point that prepares the reader for an argument. As you explore topics that you are interested in, *look for ideas about your topic, not just statements of fact or information*. Here are some examples:

**Topic:** Professional athletes' salaries.

**Topic sentence:** In spite of their great skills and talents, professional athletes are overpaid.

**Topic:** Stress

**Topic sentence:** Learning how to deal with stress is an essential survival skill.

**Topic:** SUV's

**Topic sentence:** SUV's are unnecessary vehicles promoted by the car companies to increase their profits.

**Topic:** Pets and kids

**Topic sentence:** Owning a pet can be an important part of a child's learning experience.

### **Topics: Broad and Narrow**

When we are deciding on a topic to write about we have to think about whether the topic is appropriate for a paragraph. Will we have enough points to back up our topic sentence or is the topic more suitable for an essay or even a book? We refer to topics that are very limited as being **too narrow** and topics that seem to have almost no limit as being **too broad**.

Some topics like "The Effects of Smoking" would be appropriate for paragraph, an essay or even a book depending on the level of detail the writer wishes to include. "Basic Car Repair" is clearly best covered in a book, while a paragraph could cover "How to Change Your Oil".

Your topic is likely **too narrow** if you can't come up with enough ideas to support it or it looks at just one detail.

Your topic is likely **too broad** if you seem to have so many points that you can't seem to organize them effectively.

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## Thinking and Writing: Paragraphs and Essays

Here are some examples of broad and narrow topics and some suggestions for adapting them into more manageable writing topics. Keep in mind that a person's knowledge of a particular subject can determine whether the topic is too broad or narrow.

**Broad:** Young people today face many challenges in their lives.

**More focused :** Dealing with peer pressure is the biggest challenge young people face today.

**Broad:** Growing car ownership has caused many problems.

**More focused:** Our cities are becoming noisy, congested and polluted because everybody wants to drive a car.

**Narrow:** Dogs can be very entertaining.

**More focused:** A dog can play an important role in a single person's life.

**Narrow:** Aerobic exercise is essential for fitness.

**More focused:** A complete exercise routine includes aerobic training, muscle building and proper nutrition.

The following table shows the main parts of a paragraph, shows what each part does, and provides a sample paragraph broken down into sections.

**Paragraph Organization**

Parts of a Paragraph	What Each Part Does	Sample Paragraph
<p><b>Topic Sentence</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States the topic of the paragraph</li> <li>• Makes a point about the topic</li> <li>• Usually, but not always, at the beginning of the paragraph</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Benefits of Exercise</i></b></p> <p><i>Contrary to what many out of shape people may think, exercise is not a waste of time.</i></p>
<p><b>Supporting Point 1</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each supporting point provides details to explain and support the topic sentences</li> </ul>	<p><i>First of all, exercise conditions and strengthens the body's most important muscle, the heart. A stronger heart provides increased energy and stamina.</i></p>
<p><b>Supporting Point 2</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting points can include facts, details, examples, and personal views—whatever supports the topic sentence</li> </ul>	<p><i>Exercise also changes the way people look. Muscle tone develops and posture improves as the body becomes stronger.</i></p>
<p><b>Supporting Point 3</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each separate supporting point may be one or two sentences</li> </ul>	<p><i>When people look better and feel better, their self esteem increases and they feel more confident.</i></p>
<p><b>Supporting Point 4</b></p> 		<p><i>Finally, the fitness gained through exercise helps fight off illness and disease.</i></p>
<p><b>Concluding Sentence(s)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring(s) the paragraph to a close by referring to but not repeating word-for-word the point made in the topic sentence</li> </ul>	<p><i>Exercise is not just for kids and athletes. Following a regular exercise routine pays off, both physically and mentally.</i></p>

## 5. The Drafting Process

“The main thing I try to do is write as clearly as I can. Because I have the greatest respect for the reader, and if he’s going to the trouble of reading what I’ve written, why the least I can do is make it as easy as possible for him. I rewrite a great deal to make it clear.”

E.B. White

Drafting and rewriting is not just for developing writers and students; it is an essential part of the writing process. If, like E.B. White, you consider your reader with respect, you will take the time to ensure that your writing is as clear as possible.

Here are some guidelines for using a three-draft approach to produce writing for evaluation. Of course, many students and most professional writers will write more than three drafts, but for the purposes of most academic writing courses three drafts is generally realistic.

### The First Draft: Getting your ideas on paper

A **first draft** is just that—a first attempt at getting your ideas about a topic down on paper. It’s the time to experiment with new ideas and connections and get a feeling for what feels convincing and important and what doesn’t “work”. Refer to your brainstorming or list of ideas and take some time to organize your points before you start writing. If you’re not sure about a point, include it in your draft anyway. You can always cross it out later. When writing your first draft, focus on your ideas and don’t worry too much about your precise wording, organization, grammar and spelling. You can deal with those in your second and third drafts. There is no point in fussing over punctuation when many of your sentences will be moved and /or revised. You should have a thesis statement and topic sentences for each paragraph to help keep you focused on your topic. Your goal is not to write a perfect first draft, but to get down all or most of the information you want to present.

### Second Draft: Revising

(Note: The revising stage may take several drafts)

Once you have completed your **second draft**, read it carefully. If possible, put aside your writing for a day and then read it with a fresh mind to ensure that the ideas flow smoothly. Ask for comments from a friend.

Now is the time to reorganize your ideas and add any points. You should also think about your writing style. Have you used a variety of sentences? How are you expressing your ideas? Is your tone—serious, humorous, angry, etc.—appropriate for the points you are trying to make? Are there any points that don't belong?

### Revision Checklist

Refer to this checklist to review your writing after you have made your major revisions.

#### Organization and Content

- I have a clear thesis and/or topic sentence(s).
- I have support for all of my major points.
- I have cut out points that don't seem to fit anywhere.
- The organization and method of development is clear.
  - Process lists steps in order, Cause and effect gives clear reasons or results, compare and contrast consistently uses point-by-point or block method, classifications presents three or more categories, etc.
- The conclusion brings the paragraph or essay to a satisfactory close

#### Style and Writing Mechanics

- I have used a variety of sentences.
- I have used transitions to connect my ideas.
- I have checked for major grammar errors—sentence fragments, run-ons, comma splices, etc.

#### Final Draft: Editing and Proofreading

Editing involves making changes to sentences and phrases for the purpose of clarity and style. Proofreading is checking for grammatical and spelling errors.

By the time you are writing your **third draft**, you should have a polished topic sentence or thesis and your points should be well-organized and supported. You will mainly be focusing on the technical aspects of your writing—grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

## **6. Methods of Development**

**Methods of development are patterns of organization that writers use to organize their ideas about a topic. Although a lot of writing you will come across does not rely solely on one method of development, an understanding of these patterns will help you organize your ideas and get you writing more quickly.**

- **Narration**
- **Process**
- **Classification**
- **Division**
- **Comparison and Contrast**
- **Cause and Effect**
- **Example/Illustration**
- **Description**
- **Persuasion**

### **Choosing a Method of Development**

An understanding of different methods of development and when to use them can save you valuable time in starting and organizing your essay. Many, if not most, essays by professional writers will contain elements of several types of development. A piece in the travel section of a newspaper could include narration, description, compare and contrast, classification, and illustration or example. A typical article on new cars in the auto section will likely be developed using both a classification and compare and contrast approach. Take some time to decide what you want to say and then decide which method of development will be the most effective in presenting your ideas. You don't have to slavishly adhere to a single form of development. Think of methods of development as writing tools to help you organize and focus your writing. Following are some common methods of development with some tips on how to organize and develop your essay.

#### **Narration**

A narrative paragraph or essay:

- Tells a story
- Explains how something happened

Generally, when writing a narrative paragraph you will usually relate events in the order in which they occurred. Your topic sentence should identify the situation or event and prepare the reader for a story. An effective narrative is more than just a chronological

run through of the things that happen to you in a typical day. It should contain some element of drama and tension. You can write an engaging narrative about topics like losing your wallet, discovering that a friend has lied to you, or finding or getting fired from your first job. Keep in mind that in a narrative essay your readers are not looking for information; they are looking for some dramatic interest or conflict in your story. They want to be entertained or emotionally engaged.

Most narratives are written from the first person (the “I”) point of view as in the following example.

### Sample Narrative Paragraph

#### My New Career

The morning of my big job interview started like any other. I awoke with a good night’s sleep under my belt determined and confident in getting a new job as a swamper for Williams Moving and Storage. The night before the interview, I practiced moving the furniture from one end of the house to the other. My roommates thought I was crazy. Arising from bed, I felt stronger, like a rodeo bull waiting to get out of his cage. Sitting at the kitchen table eating my Wheaties, I started looking at the furniture around me in a new light. The hide-a-bed in the living room was a 300 pound finger-eating monster opening and closing snapping at me. Looking out onto the covered patio, the wicker furniture was floating, almost drifting by itself to the front door. Then and there I knew that moving furniture was my calling. Walking to the front door, I gave the hide-a-bed a good stiff kick.

#### Process (also called how to, time order, process analysis)

A process paragraph or essay:

7. explains how to do something in a series of steps
8. explains how something works

Process writing need not be limited to concrete practical subjects such as building a doghouse or installing drywall. A process paragraph or essay might tell you how to plan a budget holiday, prepare for final exams, get a deal on a used car, or revive a sputtering romance. Pick a subject you know about and explain the process in logical steps. Consider all the information your reader would need in order to follow your instructions.

Avoid topics like how to tie your shoes or how to bake an apple pie which are unlikely to excite a reader. If you work out regularly, you might write about the steps to improved physical fitness. If you fish, you might offer advice on how to prepare yourself for a fishing trip. Write about what you know, and search for a unique slant on your topic.

Process essays that give instructions are most often written in the second person. Address the reader directly as you, but recall that there is an implied you in imperative (command) sentences. For example in the sentence, “Remove the lid.”, the subject **you** is understood but not directly stated. Note how the reader is addressed and how the steps are organized in the following process paragraphs.

### Sample Process Paragraph 1

#### Executing an Ollie

Being able to ollie on a skateboard—jumping in such a way that the skateboard sticks to your feet—is not as hard as most people think, as long as you learn some basic steps. The first step is the positioning of your feet. Your back foot should be on the tail of your board. Meanwhile, your front foot should be just behind the screws of the front trucks (wheels). You should be standing mostly on your toes, with your heel and toes pointed outwards. Once your feet are in proper position, start to bend your knees to approximately ninety degrees and prepare to jump. There are three things you now need—the three C’s: comfort, control, and confidence. Without these you will be eating a lot of pavement. Now kick down and back with your back foot so that the board pops into the air. Immediately afterward, slide the front foot up towards the nose to level out the board. Finally, bend your knees again and prepare for impact. The only step remaining is practice and lots of it. So, if doing an ollie doesn’t sound so tough, wait until you actually try one.

## Sample Process Paragraph 2

### Building Great Pecs

Having a great looking chest is easier than most people think. It starts with a few simple steps. First, begin with a flat bench press. Start with approximately 60% of your body weight. While lying on your back on the bench, grab the bar firmly with both hands so they line up with the ends of your shoulders. Push the bar up to release it from the holder and extend your arms. Avoid fully locking your arms. Then, bring the bar down slowly until it touches your chest. Push the bar back up at twice the speed it was brought down. Do ten repetitions and then take a two-minute rest. This completes one set. Add more weight if needed and complete three more sets. Within several weeks, your chest muscles will increase dramatically in size and you'll be ready for the beach.

### Classification

A classification paragraph or essay:

- explains a subject by dividing into types or categories

Although we may not think about it much, we are constantly classifying things by breaking them into types, groups or categories. By classifying things, we better understand the distinct qualities of two subjects in the same general group. If we are shopping for a new bicycle, we have probably gone through a process of classification. Do we want a road bike, a mountain bike, or a hybrid bike? By breaking down the larger category of bikes into different types of bikes, we are better able to understand the key features of different types of bikes and choose the type that best suits our needs.

Begin your classification paragraph or essay by breaking down your subject into at least three distinct groups or categories. Examples: types of parenting styles could include strict, liberal, and permissive; types of video games could include role-playing, simulation, and shoot-em-up; types of dogs could include family pets, show dogs, and working dogs. However you break down your topic you should identify the basis for the classification. What are the qualities that distinguish each of your categories? If you are classifying drivers you might group them into reckless, sensible, and overly cautious. Your basis for classification then would be **how they drive**. You might point to some specific examples to illustrate some of their driving behaviours and you might make the link between driving styles and personality.

Note how the writer in “Tattoo You” has used classification to provide a humorous picture of annoying clientele in her tattoo studio.

### Sample Classification Paragraph

#### Tattoo You

Having worked in a tattoo studio for the past year, I have come to recognize three types of annoying customers that invariably stroll through the door. The first is the Time Waster. Generally the Time Waster is not serious about getting a tattoo now, or probably ever, but nevertheless is hell-bent on wasting the artist’s time with a barrage of inane questions. They often talk big and have grandiose plans for the ultimate backpiece. But when it comes time to put down a deposit for the work, they suddenly say something like, “That sounds great. I’ll be back in six months when my next student loan comes in.” Meanwhile, the artist has started drawing the design while three serious clients went to another less “busy” studio. The next type of annoying client is the Know-it-all. These people usually have a friend with a tattoo, or maybe even a small one themselves, and therefore consider themselves to be experts on the subject. They contradict the artist on everything, and insist on using words they’ve heard in a movie because they think it makes them sound in the know. What they don’t realize, however, is that those in the know would never use a word like “tatty” to describe the art. Finishing up the list of types of annoying tattoo studio customers is the Bargain Hunter. The Bargain Hunters clearly believe that when having a design committed to their skin for life, getting the lowest price is the top priority. Bargain Hunters often have a “buddy” from some disreputable source—like their kitchen table—who “would do it much cheaper.” What all these people don’t seem to realize is that tattooing is a serious art form that artists dedicate their lives to learning and executing. A little respect and some manners would be appreciated.

#### Division

A division paragraph or essay:

- explains a subject by dividing it into its essential parts

Division is sometimes confused with classification, but it works a little differently. For example, if you were classifying restaurants, you might group them into fast food, ethnic, family, and gourmet. Approaching the subject of restaurants with a view to developing your essay through division, you would look at the qualities or the parts of a good restaurant such as food, service and atmosphere. In a division essay you identify and explain the essential qualities that make up the whole. What are the qualities of the ideal city, job or friend? For some, the characteristics of the ideal city might include a pleasant climate, an attractive physical setting, and an active cultural scene, while for others ideal

characteristics might include an active night life, cheap rents, good beaches, and a high numbers of single young people. . Your ideal job might directly use your education and skills, present constant new challenges, and allow you to work independently. An ideal friend would be loyal, fun to be with, and mentally stimulating. You can use the same approach for any number of topics. Once you have defined the essential parts, you have the basic structure of your essay laid out.

An essay about what makes a great action movie could be organized effectively using a division model. Your introduction could point out that in order for an action movie to be great, three elements—acting, screenplay, and special effects—must be convincing and work well together. Each of your body paragraphs would focus on one of these elements.

### Sample Division Paragraph

#### Great Action Flicks

Hollywood continues to produce a constant stream of expensive, big effects action movies, but most of these lack the ingredients of a great film. For a start, any film worth watching needs good actors who can deliver their lines convincingly. The wooden monotonous of many muscle bound heroes have sunk many an action film. Secondly, action films today need to have truly spectacular special effects. But these need to be creatively developed, rather than just featuring an endless series of computer-generated explosions and battles. The last and probably most important ingredient is a convincing screenplay. If the audience can't buy into the story, neither Arnold nor the Lucas Film Special Effects Team can save the film. Yet, when a good story is supported by solid acting and dazzling special effects, we can't help but be seduced by the magic of Hollywood.

### Comparison and Contrast

A comparison and contrast paragraph or essay:

- explains how two subjects are similar or different

In our daily lives we constantly make comparisons. We compare breakfast serials, TV shows, teachers, music, girlfriends and boyfriends, jobs, etc. In fact we compare almost everything to something else. Then we make choices about what we like or don't like and about what we want or definitely don't want. We often don't give much thought as to how we are making these comparisons, but usually there is an underlying logic. By making comparisons carefully, we can make can make better choices. For example, if we are looking for a new computer we will probably look at several manufacturers and models and then make our decision. We may compare on the basis of price, features, brand reputation, and service quality. Once we have weighed all these points, we'll

decide what model to buy and where to buy it. We've all been through this process, but rarely have we had to write about it. Writing out our thoughts not only helps us better understand the reasons for making a decision, but can help others make more informed choices.

A comparison and contrast composition is a formal way of organizing our thoughts. It explains the differences and similarities between two subjects and helps us evaluate subjects to understand their advantages and disadvantages, or strengths and weaknesses. If we're looking for an apartment, we compare and contrast the cost, size, location, and condition of various apartments before we make a choice. When you really think about it, most consumerism is one big exercise in comparison and contrast. When purchasing a car, a toaster, a computer, or even a bottle of shampoo, most people compare several makes, models, or manufacturers.

To compare two subjects, you first have to decide what the basis of your comparison is. When comparing two cars you are thinking about buying, you might look at styling, dependability record, performance, standard features, and comfort. When you have completed your comparison you can make a more informed choice.

A good way to begin organizing a comparison and contrast paragraph is by dividing your page into two columns and writing the name of your two points of comparison at the top of each column. The **Divide and List** approach will make it easier to decide upon the organization pattern that will work best for your paragraph. Suppose you want to compare the advantages and disadvantages of commuting by bus rather than by car under the general title of "Transportation Choices". Place a title at the top of the page and divide the page into two columns, one for car and one for bus.

### Transportation Choices

Car	Public Transit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expensive<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Gas, insurance repairs, cost of vehicle</li></ul></li><li>• Convenient,<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ No schedules, go when you want</li><li>➤ Go door to door</li><li>➤ Can carry groceries, kids, dogs, etc.</li></ul></li><li>• Comfortable<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Comfortable seats, private</li><li>➤ Can listen to radio, drink coffee</li></ul></li><li>• High environmental impact<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Pollution</li><li>➤ Traffic congestion</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cheap<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Bus pass</li></ul></li><li>• Less convenient<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Limited schedules and stops</li><li>➤ No privacy</li><li>➤ Limited to what you can carry on</li></ul></li><li>• Uncomfortable<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Noisy, share seats,</li><li>➤ Uncomfortable, may have to stand</li></ul></li><li>• Lower environmental impact<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Buses pollute much less per person</li><li>➤ Reduced congestion if most commuters use buses</li></ul></li></ul>

The table above shows the key points of comparison as well as supporting ideas for each point. Note the basis of comparison is **cost, convenience, comfort, and environmental impact**. These points will help you organize your paragraph.

### Choosing Between the Block Method and the Point-by-Point Method

There are two basic approaches to organizing a comparison and contrast essay: the **point-by-point** method and the **block** method (also called the **subject-by-subject** method). In the point-by-point method you look at one aspect of your comparison at a time and relate it to the two subjects you are comparing. The examples below show the difference between the point-by-point and block method in a paragraph comparing car ownership and transit use.

#### Point-by-point paragraph organization:

##### Introduction

<b>Point 1</b>	<b>Cost:</b>	<b>cars</b>	<b>-----</b>	<b>transit</b>
<b>Point 2</b>	<b>Convenience:</b>	<b>cars</b>	<b>-----</b>	<b>transit</b>
<b>Point 3</b>	<b>Comfort:</b>	<b>cars</b>	<b>-----</b>	<b>transit</b>
<b>Point 4</b>	<b>Environmental impact:</b>	<b>cars</b>	<b>-----</b>	<b>transit</b>

##### Conclusion

#### Comparison and Contrast using Point-by-Point Method

##### Transportation Choices

When faced with the choice of driving their own car or using the bus, the majority of North Americans opt for cars. They are not put off by the fact that owning and running a car is expensive when compared to the cost of monthly or annual transit passes in most cities. In addition to the initial cost of a car there is gas, repairs, insurance and parking which add up to thousands a year while a typical bus pass is about \$50 a month. Yet most people are willing to pay this price for the convenience of owning a car. They enjoy the freedom of coming and going according to their own whims. They are simply not willing to put up with waiting for buses that stop far from their homes and are often packed with unkempt strangers. Cars are comfortable and personal spaces, in contrast to the grungy and impersonal feeling of many buses. But as they motor happily along, few car owners even think about what their personal vehicle use is doing to the environment. Do they know that a loaded bus creates much less pollution per person than a car? Unfortunately, until there is a huge change in the attitude of car owners towards using public transit, cars will continue to rule the roads and our environment and our cities will pay the price.

In the **block method**, you deal with the points of comparison relating to one subject, and after a transition move on to your next subject.

### Block Method Paragraph Organization:

#### Introduction

##### Cars:

- Cost
- Convenience
- Comfort
- Environmental Impact

#### Transition

##### Public Transit

- Cost
- Convenience
- Comfort
- Environmental Impact

#### Conclusion

### Comparison and Contrast Using the Block Method

#### Transportation Choices

North Americans clearly prefer driving their own cars to using public transport. In many ways, the desire to own a car is easy to understand. True, cars are expensive to buy and run. Car payments, gas, insurance, and repairs can cost thousands per year. But people love the convenience of cars that they see as an expression of personal freedom. Cars provide a comfortable small personal space in which people can drink coffee and listen to music. Most car owners give little thought to the damage to the environment all these cars are doing even as they sit in traffic complaining about too many cars on the road. Unlike car owners, bus riders are prepared to make some sacrifices to save money. Bus schedules are not always convenient and buses don't take you to your door. Standing on a jerky bus is no fun either. Riders can, however, take some small pleasure in the knowledge that using a bus is the environmentally responsible way to get around town. Unfortunately, until there is a huge change in the attitude of car owners towards using public transit, cars will continue to rule the roads and our environment and our cities will pay the price.

Sample Comparison and Contrast Paragraph 2  
Point by Point method

**Synthetic Engine Oils: Worth the Price?**

Drivers who want the best protection for their engines will find that synthetic oil offers several advantages over conventional oil. First of all, it's better year round. Synthetic oil flows freely at all temperatures and circulates immediately at start up. Conventional oil thickens at low temperatures and takes time to warm up. Synthetic oil is also more stable at high temperatures, making it more dependable in hot weather. Second, synthetic oil is much cleaner than conventional oil. It contains the finest detergents, rust inhibitors, and other additives that reduce friction and make the engine run smoother and cleaner. Third, and perhaps most important, is that synthetic oil lasts longer. Conventional oil must be changed every three months or 5000 kilometres, whereas synthetic oil can last up to six times longer. Only the filter has to be changed over this period of time. Even though synthetic oil is much more expensive, it's worth the extra cost if you value the life and performance of your engine.

**Cause and Effect**

Cause and effect:

- explains the reasons (causes) why something happened
- describes the results (effects) of an event, action, or condition

There are many times when you are asked to examine a cause and effect relationship. When we visit a doctor, the doctor usually questions us carefully to determine the cause of our illness. Causes are the reasons that something happened; the causes of pollution, divorce, heart disease, anorexia, etc., can be identified and presented so that the reader gains a better knowledge of how the causes brought about certain results. Similarly, when we think of effects, we often think of benefits or advantages such as the benefits of exercise or the advantages of self-employment. Or we could look at the negative effects of a cause such as divorce, alcoholism, or global warming. Generally, in a paragraph or short essay, it is better to deal with either causes or effects.

Before you start writing, you should be clear on whether you will be dealing mostly with causes or effects. We often examine causes so that we can learn how to prevent things from happening again. Researchers look at causes of heart disease so that they can educate people on how to avoid behaviours such as high fat diets and sedentary lifestyles that contribute to heart disease. We may focus on effects to convince someone that

something—becoming a vegetarian for example—is a good idea because of the health benefits. In a paragraph focusing on effects you should clearly indicate the cause—an earthquake, for example—and then spend the rest of the paragraph detailing and explaining the specific effects. These might include damage to buildings, injuries to people, and mass psychological trauma. In a paragraph focusing on cause, state the effect (or result) in your opening and then go on to explain why this result came about. For example, in a paragraph on divorce or marriage breakdown you might look at causes such as incompatibility, infidelity, substance abuse, and neglect among others.

Sample Cause and Effect Paragraph:  
Focus on the Cause

**The Misuse of Credit Cards**

While credit cards are convenient and easy to use, the misuse of credit cards can lead to serious problems. Today, many consumers are spending beyond their ability to pay. This often leads to serious financial difficulties or even personal bankruptcy. One of the reasons for consumer over-spending is aggressive promotion by credit card companies. Fancy commercials and advertisements are everywhere and they create the image that using credit cards is easy and trendy and gives people class. They offer tempting low introductory rates and other benefits. Instead of worrying about payment with high interest rates, card users tend to get carried away and find immediate satisfaction in fulfilling their desires. Incredibly, many people seem unaware that credit cards are not free; people may not feel like they are spending money, but they are creating debts that have to be paid. They often lose track of how much they are spending. And don't realize how quickly many little purchases can add up until they receive their next credit card bill. To avoid problems with credit card debt, people need to become educated in personal financial management. Unfortunately, this kind of information isn't as easily available to consumers as credit card advertisements that promote the freedom and benefits of credit card use.

Sample Cause and Effect Paragraph:

Focus on the Effects

**How Drugs Can Destroy People's Lives**

Drug addiction is a serious health issue that affects addicts, their families and society. First of all, drug addiction has severe physical effects on the addict's body. Drug users can experience many physical symptoms including sickness, fevers, sweats and shakes, loss of appetite, and weight loss. They also face the danger of contracting serious diseases such as AIDS, hepatitis, and other communicable diseases, not to mention the risk of overdose. Families and friends of drug addicts are inevitably also affected by their addiction. Addiction can lead to serious financial problems, loss of trust, and eventually family breakup and divorce. Society as well pays a cost: crime rates go up, and more security and hospital care is needed which are all paid for by taxpayers. Drug addiction is a destructive way to live. Maybe more would be done about it if it were looked at not just as a problem that addicts face alone, but as something that affects society as a whole.

### Example (also called Illustration)

An example paragraph or essay:

- makes a point about a topic by providing examples to support it

An article about growing violence in kids' sports might include several examples which illustrate how violence has gotten out of hand in some situations. An essay about the dangers of drinking and driving could be made stronger by including several examples of the results of drinking and driving.

### Sample Illustration Paragraph

#### Plastic People

Today, men and women of all ages undergo surgery to achieve the looks they desire. Cosmetic surgery is so common that to some it is a lifestyle. Some of the most popular procedures are breast implants, liposuction, facelifts, and hair transplants. Because many prefer fuller, bigger breasts, a good number of women from all walks of life undergo the painful and costly procedure of breast implants. Even though the risks are well known, many still take their chances. And what goes better with bigger breasts than a flat abdomen? Liposuction is a quick fix for those who find good diet and exercise ineffective and time consuming. Another popular procedure for both men and women is the surgical facelift. This process promises men and women a younger and fresher look. For men who are worried about baldness, there is hair replacement. Thanks to medical advances, men can avoid the harsh reality of balding by undergoing a long lasting hair transplant procedure. Many value plastic surgery even though it's costly and can have a number of negative side effects. In spite of the many plastic surgery disasters, those obsessed with having the perfect face and body will keep the business alive and well.

### Description

A descriptive paragraph or essay:

- Describes a person, thing, place or situation.

Unlike a narrative writing, descriptive writing does not tell a story but rather tries to convey a clear impression of what something is like. Effective descriptive writing relies on specific words and phrases that create a clear picture in the reader's mind. Describing a house as unusual looking doesn't help the reader visualize the house. However, if you note the lime green paint and fake Greek columns, the reader will start to form a mental picture.

Avoid words like interesting, nice, great, etc. which reveal nothing about the real nature of the topic. Look for specific words to describe sights, sounds, smells and both physical and emotional feelings. Try to make your reader see and feel the object or situation you are describing. Compare these two sentences:

**Music came from the car as it drove by.**

**Full volume Led Zeppelin screamed from the old Camaro as it screeched by.**

The second version provides specific details that help the reader picture the scene more clearly.

Look for a pattern to help you organize your description. When describing a room you might talk about the size and shape of the room, and then about the furniture, and then about the possessions of the occupant. When describing people you could look at their dress, their general body type, and their facial features. In a descriptive essay about a person you might deal with personality, physical features, and lifestyle as a way of organizing your ideas.

When brainstorming or making a list for descriptive writing, look at your list of points and try to find ways to make them more specific.

For example: A **pile of junk** becomes a **pile of worn out shoes, broken tennis rackets and cracked ski goggles.**

### Sample Description Paragraph

#### **My First Apartment**

My first apartment was a third floor walk-up on a busy street in downtown Vancouver. The building was a faded brown characterless box. My apartment was down a dimly-lit narrow hallway covered in worn fifties style dark green carpeting. When I say apartment, I really mean room, because there was just one small square room with a tiny bathroom. The air was humid and musty. One small window provided a perfect view of the brown stucco wall of the building next door. A small “avocado” coloured stove and fridge highlighted the kitchen which consisted of a few shabby painted wood cupboards that projected into the room. Along one wall was an older pale blue sofa, which was also my bed. A small red card table with two chairs served as my kitchen and dining room table. A few feet away, several large cardboard moving boxes contained all of my clothes and personal possessions. The one bright spot was a large poster of a winter mountain scene which I had hung on the dull gray wall. It helped me survive the eight months I called this dump home.

## Persuasive (also called Argument)

A persuasive paragraph:

- tries to persuade the reader to accept your point of view or even to change his or her point of view

In persuasive writing you take a clear position and then present evidence to support your position. If, for example, you believe that the penalties for drinking and driving are too light, then your basic organization might look something like this:

**Topic:** Penalties for drinking and driving are too light

### Points to support your argument:

- people should be responsible for their actions when they drink
- cars are weapons in the hands of a drunk driver—drunk driving is a form of assault
- all situations involving drunk drivers have the potential for serious consequences
- drunk drivers responsible for most accidents
- drunk drivers often get a slap on the wrist while victims suffer for a long time
- stiff penalties would reduce drunk driving
- other drivers pay through increased insurance costs

### Sample Persuasive Paragraph

#### **Time to Get Tough with Drunk Drivers**

It's time for the courts to crack down on drunk drivers. Often even repeat offenders get small fines when caught driving with alcohol levels above the legal limit. But, drunk driving is a serious crime and should be treated as such. Drunk drivers cause most serious accidents, but all situations involving drunk drivers have the potential for serious consequences. Drunk drivers threaten the safety of everyone on the road; cars are weapons, and drunk driving is a form of assault. People should be responsible for their actions, and if they choose to drink and drive then they should pay the price. Often the victims of accidents caused by drunk drivers suffer long after these drivers have "paid their debt to society". The law should be changed so that all cases of drinking and driving would result in jail time and vehicles would be confiscated. Then perhaps more people would think twice about drinking and driving.

**Methods of Developing Paragraphs and Essays: A Quick Reference**

Before you begin writing think about your purpose. Are you trying to explain how an accident happened, give someone tips on how to buy a used car, point out the differences between two friends, or argue for stronger penalties for impaired drivers? Consider which method of development is best for making your points. The methods of development listed below provide approaches to help you arrange your ideas clearly.

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Method of Development</b>	<b>Writing Tips</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To entertain or amuse</li> <li>• To tell how something happened</li> </ul>	<b>Narrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin with a clear idea of what the main point of your story is</li> <li>• Provide clear descriptive details of character and setting to help the reader visualize the events</li> <li>• Stick with your main story line</li> <li>• Relate the events in the order they happened (chronological order)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide instructions for doing something</li> <li>• explain how something works</li> </ul>	<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your topic sentence or thesis should make it clear what you are going to explain. Example: Finding a good used car involves researching different models, knowing where to find good vehicles, and getting a thorough mechanical inspection</li> <li>• Present steps in logical or chronological order</li> <li>• Use a variety of transitions to move smoothly between points.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• give reasons why something happened</li> <li>• Show the results of some event or actions</li> </ul>	<b>Cause and Effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide whether you are going to deal with cause <b>or</b> effect and make this clear in your introduction</li> <li>• If you are explaining why something happened or the reasons for you are looking at the causes</li> <li>• If you are looking at the results of some action or event, then you are focusing on effects</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To show the differences and similarities between two things</li> </ul>	<b>Compare and Contrast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide on a pattern to use to make your comparison: point-by-point or subject-by-subject (block) method</li> <li>• Choose two things that you can reasonably compare: e.g., professional and amateur sports <b>not</b> boxing and ballet</li> <li>• Make sure the comparison offers a unique slant on the differences or similarities.</li> </ul>

## Thinking and Writing: Paragraphs and Essays

Purpose	Method of Development	Writing Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To explain something by dividing it into types, groups, or categories</li> </ul>	<b>Classification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure the categories you are grouping are of roughly equal value. Example:</li> <li>Types of athletes: pros, competitive amateurs, recreational, armchair</li> <li>Types of restaurants</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To explain the characteristics or qualities of something</li> </ul>	<b>Division</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look for the qualities that something is made up of. Think of the qualities your ideal of something—a great athlete, city, leader, teacher, etc.—would have. Example: A great restaurant will have delicious food, a distinct atmosphere and professional service</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use examples to support the point you are making about your topic</li> </ul>	<b>Illustration/ example</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Back up your point with specific examples or situations that illustrate or provide evidence for your topic sentence or thesis</li> <li>Example: Although the US is an economic giant, Japan is still the world leader in automobiles, consumer electronics, and robotics.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To create a clear impression in the reader's mind of a person, place, object, or situation.</li> </ul>	<b>Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Try to give the reader a clear impression of the person, place, thing, or situation you are describing.</li> <li>Appeal to the senses—consider how something looks, smells, tastes, feels, and sounds.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To argue for or against an idea</li> </ul>	<b>Persuasion or Argument</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide on your approach: Make your position clear at the beginning and then spend the rest of the paragraph or essay providing support for your position.</li> <li>Recognize the other side of the argument, then strike it down. e.g., Sure professional athletes are skilled and talented, but why should a second rate defenseman earn more than a brain surgeon?</li> </ul>

## **7. Writing Topics**

Here are some writing topics grouped according to method of development. Most will be appropriate for paragraphs and essays.

### **Narrative**

**Tell a story about:**

1. A time when you were pressured to do something by friends.
2. The generosity of a friend
3. A person who influenced you
4. Getting “ripped off”
5. An exciting sports moment
6. Losing something valuable
7. An experience with authority
8. A big social mistake
9. A childhood thrill
10. Your first job/date/day at college/etc.
11. An accident or a violent incident
12. How you got that scar

## Process

### Tell or describe how to:

1. Deal with a bad boss
2. Buy a used car
3. Get into shape
4. Prepare for a job interview you really want/really don't want
5. Plan a vacation
6. Deal with a rude person.
7. Survive on a low budget
8. Live a life of leisure
9. Burglar proof your home
10. Maintain your car/bike/body/relationship/etc.
11. Succeed in school/at work/in sports/etc.
12. Stop smoking

## Classification

### Group or classify:

1. Students/teachers/parents
2. Friendships/relationships
3. Jobs
4. Vacations
5. Diets
6. Cars/bikes/machines/etc.
7. Television shows/movies/books/computers/video games/etc.
8. Hobbies/sports/leisure activities
9. Pets
10. Crimes
11. Bad Habits
12. Parties/weddings/social events

## Division

### Analyze the qualities of:

1. A great athlete
2. The ideal city
3. A strong marriage
4. An entertaining book/film/play/television show/etc.
5. The perfect crime
6. The personality of a family member, friend or other influential person
7. Your dream car/house/gaming system/entertainment system/etc.
8. The perfect holiday
9. A great concert
10. A good education
11. Your ideal job
12. A great meal/party/social event/etc.

## Comparison and Contrast

### Compare and contrast:

1. Two places you have lived in or visited
2. Two people you have known
3. Two schools/stores/houses/apartments/restaurants/etc.
4. Two different ways of doing something e.g., formal learning vs. learning on the job
5. Now and then: a person, place or thing
6. City and country living
7. Two jobs you have had
8. Life before and after: marriage, divorce, children, new job, etc.
9. Cars, bicycles, computer games, etc.
10. Big screen movies and videos
11. Ideal diet with most diets
12. Two ways of solving a problem

## Cause and Effect

Explain causes (reasons) or effects (results) of:

1. Owning a car/not owing a car
2. Success/failure in school, business, relationships
3. Drinking too much coffee, watching too much television, eating too much junk food, etc.
4. Marriage breakdown
5. Stress
6. Procrastination
7. Owning a pet
8. Losing/getting a job
9. Bullying
10. Pollution
11. Drug or alcohol dependency
12. An accident or personal disaster: e.g., a car accident, house fire, etc.

## Example/Illustration

Use examples to make a case for:

1. Driving skills are on the decline.
2. The internet has changed the way we communicate.
3. Violence in sports has gone too far
4. Rude behaviour is becoming more common
5. There's a pet for everyone
6. Our society is becoming more/less violent
7. Older people don't act "old" anymore
8. Commercialism is destroying our cities
9. Learning something new often begins in frustration
10. The best relationships are sometimes the most unlikely or least expected
11. Jobs that I've hated
12. People that I've admired

## Description

### Describe:

1. A person you respect
2. A place you have lived in
3. A scene that has affected you emotionally
4. An object of desire
5. A pet
6. The scene of an accident
7. Your house after a party
8. A view you'd like to be looking at
9. Your feelings when you sit down to write
10. Your reaction to a piece of good/bad news
11. How you felt after a time of extreme physical exertion
12. How you felt about getting something that you had worked hard for

## **Persuasive**

### **Make a case for or against:**

1. College tuition should be free
2. Smoking should be banned from all public places/the bans against smoking are going too far
3. Marijuana should be decriminalized/medicinal marijuana should be freely available
4. Professional athletes are over paid/People take professional sports too seriously
5. Penalties for drinking and driving are too light
6. Parents should be held responsible for the crimes of their children
7. All children should play team sports
8. Dog owners should be responsible for the actions of their pets
9. SUV owners should pay extra road taxes
10. The government should stop building casinos
11. Private medical clinics should be allowed to operate freely
12. Drug addiction should be treated as a medical issue, not a criminal one

## 8. Essay Writing

### What is an essay?

An essay is a focused piece of writing about a single topic. An essay is more than just a collection of information; an essay presents your views—your argument—about a topic and provides support for your argument. This general principle of argument and support applies whether you are arguing for a total ban on cigarette smoking, illustrating the differences between Victoria and Vancouver, or arguing about the importance of maintaining culture and heritage. An essay will contain your views because you choose the information you want to include, but it is not simply an expression of your personal opinions. Your arguments must be backed up—supported or explained in some way.

The basic approach to essay writing according to Sheridan Baker is to: “**Make your point and back it up.**” You make your point in your thesis statement and in your body paragraphs you provide evidence for your point of view.

An essay is a way of thinking about a topic that is different than simply talking about it. Essay writing requires that you organize and express your thoughts clearly. The same models of development that you used for writing paragraphs—classification, cause and effect, etc.—can be used for writing essays.

### Essay Organization

At the most basic level, an essay has a beginning, a middle, and an end. These serve different purposes and should be distinct sections. A more formal model of essay organization follows.

Essay Organization: Parts of an Essay

Parts of the Essay	Each Part Should Include:	Purpose of Each Part
<p><b>Introductory Paragraph</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead in sentence or sentences</li> <li>• Thesis statement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce your topic</li> <li>• Capture the reader's interest</li> <li>• State your <b>thesis</b>—the main point you want to make about your topic</li> <li>• Set the tone</li> </ul>
<p><b>Body Paragraph 1</b></p>  <p><b>Body Paragraph 2</b></p>  <p><b>Body Paragraph 3</b></p>  <p><b>Additional Body Paragraphs</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two or more supporting paragraphs</li> <li>• Topic sentences for each paragraph—each paragraph should focus on a distinct point</li> <li>• Paragraphs provide evidence to support the thesis statement</li> <li>• Transitions for continuity between ideas and between paragraphs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evidence to support and/or to explain your thesis statement</li> <li>• Include examples, facts, descriptions, statistics, etc.—whatever helps support your thesis</li> </ul>
<p><b>Concluding Paragraph</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reference to the thesis statement but not an exact restatement</li> <li>• A summary statement, question, suggestion, etc., to wrap up the essay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave your reader with a clear impression of the main idea of your essay</li> </ul>

Sample Student Essay: Process

Parts of an Essay	Sample Essay
Title	
Provides a hint about the content. Catches the reader's interest	<b>High Style, Low Budget</b>
Introductory paragraph	
The writer uses questions to attract the reader's interest. Establishes a light, playful <b>tone</b> . Transition to thesis. <b>Thesis statement</b>	<p>Are you a student or a perennially starving artist? Do you feel you have more style in your little finger than most people have in their entire being, but just not enough cash? Living on a tight budget doesn't have to mean living like a pauper. <b>With a little bit of creative ingenuity, any financially challenged young person can transform three major aspects of his or her meager existence—housing, clothing, and food—into an enviable lifestyle.</b></p>
First Supporting Paragraph	
Topic sentence  Supporting points	<p>As trite as it sounds, the number one thing you can do to improve the space you call home is something your mother told you: "Clean your room!" Admittedly, many of us are card carrying members of the Bourgeois Failure club and resist cleaning our rooms or going to bed at a decent hour just on principle. But there is certainly something to be said for finding that term paper or sketchpad exactly when you need it. On a more exciting note, decorating your space, whether it is a room or a whole house can be an inexpensive and satisfying creative endeavour. Enlist your friends; organize a house painting party and offer to help paint their place next time. Frequent thrift stores and develop an eye for discarded treasures that would make one-of-a-kind furniture. You can reveal your artistic side by recycling everything from old fabric to driftwood to create a unique space you can truly call your own. And don't forget lighting. An armful of candles from the dollar store will transform any room into a cozy, magical place.</p>

## Thinking and Writing: Paragraphs and Essays

<b>Second Supporting Paragraph</b>	
<p>Topic sentence</p> <p>Supporting sentences</p> <p>Transitions</p>	<p>Happily, it doesn't have to cost a fortune to dress stylishly. Thanks to the current passion for retro and vintage clothing, (and mainstream culture's surprising embrace of the "new individuality) anyone can put some creative skills to work and look like a fashionista without breaking the bank. There are at least three avenues to go to get panache for pennies. First, there's the consignment store/thrift shop route. The secret is to go often, and know what you are looking for. It helps to have a look in mind and to familiarize yourself with the components of that look. Then, there is the all black wardrobe. The trick here is that any a few good pieces are needed and these can be mixed or matched easily without an additional outlay of cash for more colors or passing trends. Finally, and probably the most fun, is organizing a clothes swapping party. Gather together a few good friends, a bottle of wine, and any items that you haven't worn in the last six months to trade in for something new and exciting.</p>
<b>Third Supporting Paragraph</b>	
<p>Topic sentence</p> <p>Supporting sentences</p>	<p>Once you've upgraded your housing and your wardrobe, it's time to focus on food. It's one of the biggest budget items, but there's no reason anyone should have to subsist on a diet of Kraft Dinner now matter how strapped for cash. The most helpful thing you can do is to start off with a shopping list and buy staple that have a long shelf life and can be used in a variety of meals. It's also worth investigating the world of ethnic cooking both as a source for economical nutritious meals and for the variety of tastes and textures to discover. Finally, there is the ubiquitous potluck. The potluck dinner has saved many an impoverished young person from culinary boredom or near starvation.</p>
<b>Concluding Paragraph</b>	
<p>Brings the essay to a close by summarizing the points made in the body of the essay</p>	<p>Living well is a state of mind; it depends more on using one's imagination than on the amount of money one has. It's actually more of a challenge and more personally satisfying to think up alternative way to solve life's problems. Living in style on a tight budget forces you to be creative, and you develop all sorts of new skills in the process. Becoming a gourmet ethnic cook, making your own funky furniture and acquiring a knack for choosing timeless good quality clothing are but a few effects. These skills will last a lifetime and may come in handy later when money is (hopefully) not so much of a concern.</p>

## Developing a Thesis

A thesis is a clear statement of the main point you are making in your essay; it is more than just a simple statement of fact. To say **many people are stressed out these days** is simply a statement of fact. Your reader expects to learn more. Why are people stressed out? What is the effect of stress on people's lives? A thesis statement will not only state the topic, but it will offer a point of view or an opinion about the topic. A better thesis statement would be: **Stress is having a serious impact on people's social, personal and work lives.** In this example, you can see that the thesis statement also plays a role in determining the overall structure of your essay. It can provide a **preview** of your essay. You are preparing the reader—and yourself—for an essay that deals the effects of stress on three clearly defined areas of people's lives.

An essay without a clear thesis will feel flat and unconvincing no matter how much evidence you present. Essayist Sheridan Baker suggests that an essay without a thesis is simply a “tour of the miscellaneous”. Your reader will quickly become bored and uncertain of the point you are trying to make. You must invite and interest your reader and your starting point should be a clear thesis. Your writing will be stronger and more clearly focused if you recognize that the core of your essay is an argument in support of some idea.

You should be able to state the thesis of your essay readily to someone who asks what your essay is about. If you know what your essay is about—the main idea you are trying to get across—then your essay has a better chance of staying on track. It is more useful to say that your essay is about arguments against capital punishment than simply to say it is about capital punishment.

If you are writing an essay about cars, it is not enough to say “Cities today are filled with cars”. Everyone knows this. A more provocative thesis statement might be “Our obsession with cars is ruining the quality of life in our cities”. Then you certainly have the attention of all those car lovers and you've laid out the basis for a clear and stimulating argument. You could go one step further and outline the specific points you are going to make in your supporting paragraphs. For example: Our obsession with cars is making us lazy, contributing to the destruction of the environment, and destroying the character of our cities.

Note that Narrative and Process essays do not follow a three-point pattern. A narrative relates a sequence of events, while a process relates a series of steps.

### Sample Introductory Paragraph

In this sample first paragraph **the thesis statement is in bold.**

North Americans have long been obsessed with their cars. For many car owners, cars are expression of their identity. The owner of a sleek red sports car is trying to tell the world that he or she is young and exciting, and likes to live life in the fast lane. There is no doubt that cars are both fun and a great convenience. However, our love affair with the automobile has had a serious effect on the quality of life in our cities. **Our obsession with cars is making us lazy, contributing to the destruction of the environment, and is destroying the character of our cities.**

### Developing a thesis statement from a topic

The examples below show how general topics have been formed into clear thesis statements.

1. **Topic:** Japanese cars and American cars  
*Thesis statement: Because of their reliability, styling, and high resale value, many buyers are choosing Japanese cars over American cars. (division)*
2. **Topic:** Technology and modern life  
*Thesis statement: In many ways technology has made our lives worse rather than better. (persuasive)*
3. **Topic:** Parenting styles.  
*Thesis statement: Parents can be grouped according to the parenting styles they practice: the strict, the liberal, and the hands-off. (classification)*

Sample Student Essay  
Cause and Effect

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**The Causes of Small Business Failure**

Small businesses are a huge part of the Canadian economy. Some small businesses are quite successful, while others cannot even get off the ground or fail shortly after they have started. There are many reasons why businesses fail. The cause for small business failure can be found with employees, products, management, location, and even the owner. These all play a major role in the success of a small business, and if any one factor is overlooked, it can spell disaster for the business.

Employees are the forefront of any small business. They give primary attention to the customers in the store, while properly managing the products by organizing and displaying the merchandise. They provide the appropriate information about the store's services and products insuring that sales are made to produce revenue. With all that responsibility falling on employee's shoulders, it is essential that they do a good job. If employees are bitter or unhappy with their job, employer, or working conditions, they may revolt by providing poor customer service, or by being just downright rude to potential customers. These offended customers will tell others of their bad experience to ensure that they don't shop there. Poor employee performance and behaviour will push away customers who will spend their money elsewhere.

In order for small businesses to do well, they need to have a variety of products to choose from. Small businesses need to take a niche in the market they want to tap so they can compete with the big chain stores. When managers or owners become too aggressive and try to compete on a larger scale, they spread themselves too thin, sometimes buying products that are not needed or that their clientele doesn't want. Having too much stock or inventory is essentially money that is tied up in products that can't be sold or that have to be sold at a discount. Those products become lost revenue for the business, putting owners in a tight money situation and making it difficult to buy newer and better products. Overstocked stores lose their appeal by being too crowded, which makes shopping difficult and causes customers to become bored looking at the same old items.

Business owners rely on themselves and their managers to communicate with their employees. This communication is vital. It lets the owner know what is happening on the sales floor. A good manager ensures that the worker's needs, wants, and demands are recognized and communicated to the owner, and not overlooked. They can then work together to improve sales performance and customer service. Poor managers may make employees feel that their ideas are not being heard, and that they are not able to get their ideas across to the owner. Furthermore, a poorly managed store may have high employee turnover as a result of mismanagement. Employee turnover can effect sales because

customers may have become accustomed to specific sales people and don't want to deal with new or inexperienced employees.

Another key element in small business success is location. The store must be easily accessible to its patrons. Good location alone can create awareness of the store and help promote business. Even though many prime locations can cost a fortune to lease or rent they may be worth it. A good location alone can make or break a small business. Sometimes new stores try to save on rent and end up in out of the way locations that have no walk by traffic. Good location is especially important if the business relies on impulse buyers or sells non-specialty product that customers can find elsewhere.

The final ingredient in small business success is the owner. Owners have to have their wits about them. A good business plan can help the owner make key decisions. Owners need to be very attentive to the market they are involved in and be willing to make changes to give themselves a competitive edge. An owner who is unwilling or unable to make changes and respond to demands from employees and the marketplace will fail, thus losing his or her dreams and investment.

For some, being the owner of a small business can be a dream come true, but for others it can become a nightmare if managed poorly. There are many ways to succeed at running a small business, but there are just as many ways, if not more, to fail. In spite of the challenges, those businesses that maintain a high quality of employees and products, hire effective managers, are in good locations, and have responsive owners stand a good chance of becoming successful.

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Sample Student Essay  
Classification

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**Garage Sales and the People Who Run Them**

As the sunny days of summer draw nearer and the temperature rises, like flowers, garage sales begin to pop up in front yards across the city. If you go for a walk or for a drive on a sunny weekend, you will certainly come across one or more garage sales. Colourful balloons and handwritten signs attract bargain hunters. Whenever I pass a garage sale, I always stop and check things out. Eventually, I have come to realize that there are several kinds of garage sales. Generally garage sales and the people who hold them can be divided into four groups: the let's-have-fun garage sale, the wanna-make-money garage sale, the semi-professional garage sale, and the everything-must-go garage sale.

The first type is the let's have fun garage sale. Cheerful and energetic housewives usually operate this kind of sale. Their purpose for having the sale is to have fun. Like little girls who pretend to be shop owners, they enjoy playing salespeople at their own garage sales. If you ask the price of one of their items, they often begin to tell you a history of the item of family memories associated with the item instead of the price. Basically, they are generous and respond to your offer politely, for having fun is the most important thing for them. They are likely to say, "Take it, it's a garage sale!" After the sale, they usually give unsold items to a charitable organization.

The second kind of garage sale is the wanna-make-money garage sale. The purpose for this garage sale is strictly to make money. People who have this kind of sale are not so smiley or friendly and give you sharp looks. The prices of their items are usually higher than at other garage sales. Some of the prices are ridiculously high for secondhand goods. You may get a sense of greed from these people. They won't give in while negotiating a price with you, and in most cases, will refuse your offer. Even if they end up not selling much of their stuff, they are not easily discouraged. They will continue to hold garage sales until they sell all of their pricey items.

A more sophisticated type of garage sale is the semi-professional garage sale. This kind of sale is similar to a trading business. One of my neighbours holds this kind of sale. He goes to other people's garage sales and buys things at low prices and then sells them at his garage sale at a profit. He goes all over the place and collects saleable items, and then adds a few dollars on each price. For people like him, garage sales are like a second job. The proprietors of these sales are usually friendly and know how to talk to their customers like good salesmen. They know the prices and value of items and they can convince people that something is a good deal. Occasionally, they will sell you something at a give-away price when they sense it's time to get rid of old stock.

Finally, there is the everything-must-go sale. Mostly, people who are moving out of town hold this kind of sale. Everything in this case means everything. In extreme cases, even their dogs are for sale. These people usually don't close their sales after one day. The sale continues until they leave town. At the beginning, they are concerned with making money, but as their departure date draws closer, they drop their prices. It's important to have a nice chat with these people to find out when they are leaving. In the end, they will be desperate to dispose of their items and will give you a really good price.

Besides finding good deals at garage sales, observing the operating styles of the people who run them is entertaining. Garage sales reveal a part of their owners' lifestyles and tastes, and the style of the sale shows what kind of people they are. Analyzing the styles of garage sales and the people who hold them is for me a fascinating way to observe human behaviour.

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Sample Student Essay  
Compare and Contrast

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**Skateboards: Professional Versus Generic Equipment**

The sport of skateboarding is bigger than ever. Its popularity has grown so rapidly that the demand for products has opened up a huge opportunity for anyone who wants to make skateboarding equipment. Unfortunately, this demand for skateboarding equipment has resulted in an influx of cheap and inferior products which compete with professional equipment in the retail market. Although inexpensive gear has put more kids on skateboards, it's giving them products that are substantially inferior in design, quality and performance to professional gear. The design and quality of the decks, trucks and wheels is being overlooked in the production of the cheaper equipment.

Skateboard decks can vary greatly in quality. Professional skateboard decks are made from the highest quality laminated maple wood and the lightest and strongest glues available. This combination of wood and glue results in a deck that is strong, lightweight, and has ample amounts of life or "pop". Generic decks are made from plywood, which has no real strength and wears out more rapidly than the maple on professional decks. The deck's strength, life, and shape gives the skater an advantage in learning new tricks. Cheaper decks have very plain shapes and don't offer the same feel as a pro deck. Pro decks offer skaters a variety of shapes, concaves, widths, and lengths, giving skaters a more personalized piece of equipment for their style of skating. Even the griptape on generic decks is of a lesser quality, offering for less traction than the grip on a pro board.

As for the variety of professional and generic trucks on the market, there are also drastic differences in quality. The trucks are the component of the board to which the wheels attach. They let the skater turn the deck. Metal trucks have a true pivot point and flexible bushings that give skaters the ability to turn smoothly while they set up for their maneuvers. Pro trucks turn substantially better than cheap ones. Pro quality trucks offer the skater more selection, higher quality metals, and cleaner cast mold designs. Trucks offered on cheaper boards are usually made from low grade metal or plastic that breaks easily even when used to perform basic skateboarding tricks like the grind. The price of a set of pro trucks is 20 to 30 dollars higher than generic ones, but the advantages and durability justify the cost.

Finally, skaters should not overlook wheels in the purchase of a complete skateboard. Wheels are as important as decks and trucks. Skaters should examine their options carefully. A good set of wheels allows the board to run smoothly on all sorts of terrain. There are drastic differences in the construction quality and materials used in the wheels of pro quality and generic boards. Good wheels are made of urethane, while the

majority of blank wheels on cheap boards are made of plastic. There are many different grades of urethane which vary in durability, but all will outlast plastic. Plastic wheels start to disintegrate and lose bits over time, giving the skater a bumpy ride. Unlike plastic wheels, professional ones come in a large variety of widths and diameters. Pro wheels also offer different levels of hardness which can really make a difference to a seasoned skater.

Now that skateboarding is so popular, there is a considerable stream of new products onto the market. With such a variety of equipment, it can be tough for someone to make an informed decision when buying a skateboard. The sheer quality of professional equipment really makes a difference even for skaters who are just learning the basics. Undoubtedly, pro gear has advantages over cheaper skateboarding equipment because the people designing and developing this gear are skaters who make great products because they love the sport and care about its progression.

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## 9. Starting, connecting and concluding

### Writing introductions

#### Your introduction should:

1. **Capture the interest of your reader.** If the introduction can grab the reader's attention, then he or she will continue reading. A dull or flat introduction will send the reader looking for more stimulating material.
2. **Provide any necessary background information about your topic.** For example, you might point to the recent bans on smoking in public buildings and restaurants to launch into an argument for or against the new laws.
3. **Set the tone of your essay.** Will your essay be serious, humorous, light-hearted, or deeply emotional? Your introductory paragraph will set the tone for the rest of the essay.
4. **Present the thesis statement.** Your introductory paragraph should contain a clear thesis statement—the main idea you want to prove or demonstrate about your topic. The thesis statement can appear anywhere in the paragraph, but you will likely find it easiest to make it the last sentence.

### Ways of starting

(Examples based on a process essay “Dealing with Stress” are provided to show how each of these approaches might be used to begin a similar essay. The thesis statement is the same for each of these introductions.)

1. **Make a general statement** about your topic and gradually narrow your subject to your thesis.

*Life today seems complex and constantly changing. As a result, you may feel that you have so many responsibilities that you just can't deal with them all, and this leads to a great deal of stress. However you shouldn't despair. **By identifying the causes of your stress, reorganizing your priorities, and taking up a hobby or sport, you can manage the stress in your life.***

2. **Ask a question or questions** about your topic to get your readers thinking about the topic and anticipating the kind of answers you will offer.

*Are you feeling overwhelmed by the demands of everyday life? Do you feel like you just can't get everything done? Are you constantly feeling under stress? Well don't give up. There are steps you can take to deal with stress. **By identifying***

*the causes of your stress, reorganizing your priorities, and taking up a hobby or sport, you can manage the stress in your life.*

3. **Begin with a quotation.** You can use a quotation by a famous person or someone in the news or even a commonly heard expression that sums up a point you are trying to make or argue against.

*“I just can’t cope anymore”. Many Canadians find themselves saying these words when it seems that the stresses of life are just too much to deal with. Some turn to doctors for medication. Others just plug on, unhappy, confused and dysfunctional. Still others have discovered that they can learn to manage the stress in their lives without drugs **by identifying the causes of their stress, reorganizing their priorities, and taking up a hobby or sport.***

4. **Make a strong claim or take a strong position** about your subject.

*Doctors are not doing enough to help the large numbers of Canadians who seek their help in dealing with stress. Instead of prescribing Prozac as a quick cure, they should be helping people learn drug-free strategies for coping with stress **By identifying the causes of stress, reorganizing priorities, and taking up a hobby or sport, people can learn to manage the stress in their lives.***

5. **Point to the importance of your topic.** Explain why your topic is important and why people should give it some thought.

*Learning how to deal effectively with stress is one of the most important skills a person can develop. Many people fail to realize their full potential because they constantly feel stressed out by the many stresses in their lives. Many suffer needlessly because they have no idea where to begin. Some turn to drugs and alcohol which only lead to further problems. But there are some ways to keep stress from destroying your life. **By identifying the causes of your stress, reorganizing your priorities, and taking up a hobby or sport, you can manage the stress in your life.***

6. **Relate a personal experience or tell an anecdote** that relates to your thesis. (Not the change in the writer’s point of view from third person to first person)

*Two years ago, I found myself unable to cope with the stress of dealing with my job, raising two young children and trying to go to school part-time. I was stretched too thinly in too many directions. A friend advised me to seek some help before I had a breakdown. A sympathetic counselor helped me deal with my stress by giving me some coping strategies. **I found that by identifying the causes of my stress, reorganizing my priorities, and taking up a hobby, I was able to manage the stress in my life.***

## Transitions

“Word carpentry is like any other kind of carpentry: you must join your sentences smoothly.”

Anatole France

Transitions are words that help writers make connections and move from one idea to the next smoothly. Without transitions, your writing may feel choppy and disconnected. Your paragraphs will sound more like a list of sentences rather than a unified whole.

Look at the paragraph below. The transition words and phrases are in **bold**. Note how the transitions help to connect the ideas.

### How to Spend Your Time Wisely

Although everyone has the same 24 hours a day, some people are very productive **while** others run around and seem to let time slip away. It can make a significant difference in your life if you consider how you spend your time. To spend your time wisely, **the first step** is to organize your priorities. **Start by** dividing your activities into the things you have to do and the things you want to do. **Then**, choose the main activities from each category. Make a list and write down which activity should be done first, second, third, and so on. **Before** you do anything else, make sure you do those. If you have several places to visit, think about the most efficient route considering the distances between each place. Always think about how to use short pieces of time effectively. Bring short reading materials or pens and memo pads. **While** waiting for a bus or a friend, there is enough time to make a grocery list or even do a little studying. Some people carry post cards with them and write short letters while having a coffee or waiting for their lunch to arrive. Careful management of these small amounts of time is the key to using your time effectively. **Of course**, if you return home and spend three hours watching junk on TV, you are pretty much defeating the purpose of careful time management.

Transitions			
<b>Conjunctions – joining words</b>		<b>Showing Cause and Effect</b>	
for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so ( <b>fanboys--use to connect independent clauses</b> )		as a consequence consequently as a result because	therefore for this reason since thus
<b>Comparing</b>		<b>Contrasting</b>	
similarly as well also likewise like all	equally in the same way at the same time too both	instead as opposed to in spite of however whereas except for	on the other hand in contrast unlike yet different from
<b>Explaining, arguing, giving reasons</b>		<b>Showing Conditions</b>	
of course for example for instance because	actually in fact	even though while unless although	if, even if otherwise despite nevertheless
<b>Adding Information</b>		<b>Showing Time Order</b>	
as well also besides not only not to be forgotten furthermore in addition above all	moreover then again, too too yet another yet again most of all most importantly	first, first of all, etc. second, third, etc. at the start, to start at the beginning one another now, then after that, afterwards next when	again during following finally at last at the end to finish in summary, to sum up the final step
<b>Admitting a Point</b>		<b>Showing Conviction</b>	
of course after all obviously still even so	however granted all the same admittedly nonetheless	certainly surely without a doubt undoubtedly especially	no doubt presumably apparently evidently particularly

## Writing Conclusions

Your conclusion should leave your reader with a sense of completion. You shouldn't be introducing any new information, but you might ask a question or point to a new direction or possibility about your topic. Here are a few ways to wrap up your essay based on the example "Dealing with Stress":

1. **Restate the thesis in different words** or refer to the thesis and remind your reader that you've dealt with it.

*Our lives will never be free of stress, but our ability to manage stress will determine how satisfied we are with our lives. When we understand the causes of our stress, take a good look at our priorities, and find a relaxing hobby or sport, we can successfully deal with the stress in our lives.*

2. **Make a recommendation, draw a conclusion, offer a solution or make an assessment.**

*If you're looking for a solution to deal with that feeling of being stressed out all the time, don't expect an easy fix. But if you take the time to understand yourself better and develop a plan, you can learn to manage the stress in your life.*

3. **Make a prediction** about what's going to happen in relation to your topic.

*Stress is not going to go away. What is changing though, is the way in which people deal with it. There has been a huge backlash against the drug companies that have been promoting drugs as the solution to stress. In the future, more and more people will find ways to manage stress without drugs.*

4. **Ask a question** which will lead your reader to think back upon your subject.

*Our lives will never be free of stress, but our ability to manage stress will determine how satisfied we are with our lives. Will these techniques work for you? The only way to find out is to put them to the test.*

## 10. Writing Mechanics

### Improving Your Writing

One quick way of improving your writing is to make sure that it is free of grammatical errors. There are grammar rules that all writers need to understand and follow. Awareness of some basic grammar concepts can help you quickly correct difficulties in your writing.

**Here is a list of writing skills that you can use with your instructor to help you identify the specific areas of writing mechanics that you are having difficulty with.**

Writing Skills	I have a clear understanding	I need more explanation and practice
<b>Writing Mechanics: Grammar and Spelling</b>		
<b>Punctuation 1</b> (periods, question marks, commas, capitals, quotation marks, apostrophes)		
<b>Punctuation 2</b> (semi-colons, colons, dashes, parentheses)		
<b>Subject/verb agreement</b>		
<b>Verb Tenses</b>		
<b>Sentence Fragments</b>		
<b>Run-on sentences, comma splices</b>		
<b>Parallelism</b>		
<b>Pronoun references</b>		
<b>Pronoun case forms</b>		
<b>Point of view</b>		
<b>Spelling</b>		
<b>Style and Organization</b>		
<b>Sentence variety</b>		
<b>Unity</b>		
<b>Coherence</b>		
<b>Word usage, word choice</b>		
<b>Paragraph/essay organization</b>		
<b>Thesis/topic sentences</b>		
<b>Transitions</b>		
<b>Conclusions</b>		