

OUTLINING A FIVE PARAGRAPH ESSAY

PART A: Parts of a Five Paragraph Essay

Knowing how to create a proper five paragraph expository essay is a useful skill. The best way to write a good essay is to first create a good framework upon which to build it. That framework is the essay *outline*, a blueprint for you to follow when composing your work. An essay outline forces you to organize your thoughts into logical, coherent, related groupings of ideas. This is much more enjoyable to read and has much more impact than scattered, disorganized, muddled work. Once the outline is created, writing the actual essay is really quite easy.

A basic five paragraph essay has an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. The *introductory paragraph* in an expository essay doesn't have to be very long. After reading your introductory paragraph, the reader should have a good idea of what your essay will be about. It contains the *topic sentence*, which states your *thesis* or the point you are going to make, and briefly introduces your main ideas in support of the thesis, without going into a lot of detail. If a main point is not mentioned in the introductory paragraph, then it shouldn't appear in the body of the essay. By the same token, every main point that is mentioned should also appear in the body of the essay. Ideally, the introductory paragraph is also written in an engaging way to capture your reader's interest and encourage further reading.

A basic five paragraph essay has three *body paragraphs* which allows you to develop three main ideas or arguments in support of your point of view. Each one is constructed like a proper paragraph, with a topic sentence, and detail sentences in support of your argument. These paragraphs tend to be much longer than the introductory paragraph. In the best writing, each paragraph contains a transition sentence which leads the reader to the next paragraph.

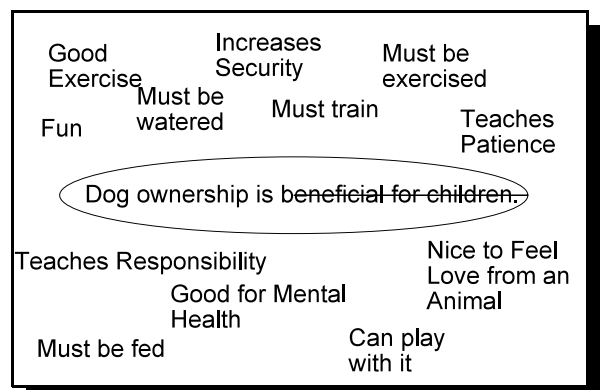
The final paragraph in a five paragraph essay is the *concluding paragraph*. This paragraph is where you summarize the arguments or points you have made, restate your thesis, and draw a final conclusion. It should be written in such a way as to convince the reader that your point of view is correct.

So how do you fill up these five paragraphs with quality writing? Brainstorm!

PART B: Brainstorming Ideas

When you write an essay in school, the topic is usually given to you by your teacher. You still have to come up with your own thesis about the topic your teacher has given you. It is a trite saying, but true: The best way to get a good idea is to have a lot of ideas. On a piece of paper, jot down the topic in the centre. Brainstorm! Then surround the topic with ideas as they come to you. Don't judge any of the ideas at this point, just put down as many as you can think of.

Once you have as many ideas as you can think of,



examine them critically. Some might not seem to fit your topic at all, so cross them out and discard them. Others might be just a repeat of something that is there already. There will be good ideas there as well. Pick the strongest to use; three main points which you can develop in the body of your essay. If some of your ideas seem to be supported by other ideas, then they are good candidates to become one of these main points.

PART C: Creating the Outline

A properly constructed essay outline is the framework upon which you hang your finished essay. Using the dog ownership example from the previous page, one possible essay outline looks like this.

Dog Ownership Essay Outline

Opening Paragraph

Thesis: Ownership of a dog is beneficial for children.

Main Points:

1. Teaches responsibility
2. Increases exercise levels.
3. Provides hours of fun

Essay Body

First Paragraph:

Topic Sentence:

Owning and caring for a dog teaches young people the meaning of responsibility.

Supporting details:

Responsible for care, feeding, and watering.
Responsible for exercising dog.
Responsible for obedience training of dog.

Concluding Sentence:

Dog ownership teaches children what responsibility is all about.

Second Paragraph:

Follows the same format as the first paragraph, but develops another point.

Third Paragraph:

Follows the same format as the first paragraph, but develops another point.

Concluding Paragraph

Summary of points:

There are many benefits for children who own dogs. They learn responsibility, increase exercise levels, and have lots of fun.

Restate thesis in new way:

Every child should experience the many benefits of dog ownership.

Name:

Date:

ASSIGNMENT: Using the sample on the previous page as a guide, write a properly constructed five paragraph essay outline for *two* of the essay topics below. Use the topics presented, or negotiate different ones with your teacher. Attach this page, and the checklists on the following page to your work and hand it in for your teacher to for feedback..

ESSAY TOPICS

- Dogs on leash should be allowed at the park.
- Dogs shouldn't be allowed in the park under any circumstances.
- Tolls should be used to help pay for new highways and bridges.
- Professional days should occur in the summer, so Spring Break is a week longer.
- The Graduated Licence Program for new drivers is a good idea.
- The Graduated Licence Program for new drivers is unfair to young people.
- All workers should pay a flat 15% income tax rate, no matter what their earnings.

ESSAY OUTLINE MARKING CHECKLIST

- 1. Did I write my thesis as a complete sentence?
- 2. Did my thesis make my opinion clear?
- 3. Did I support my thesis with three or more points or arguments?
- 4. Did I have enough information to support all of my points or arguments?
- 5. Did I write a complete topic sentence for each paragraph?
- 6. Did I use transition sentences to link one paragraph to the next?
- 7. Did I put the paragraphs in an order that makes sense?
- 8. Did I restate my thesis in my concluding paragraph?

TEACHER COMMENTS:

ESSAY OUTLINE MARKING CHECKLIST

- 1. Did I write my thesis as a complete sentence?
- 2. Did my thesis make my opinion clear?
- 3. Did I support my thesis with three or more points or arguments?
- 4. Did I have enough information to support all of my points or arguments?
- 5. Did I write a complete topic sentence for each paragraph?
- 6. Did I use transition sentences to link one paragraph to the next?
- 7. Did I put the paragraphs in an order that makes sense?
- 8. Did I restate my thesis in my concluding paragraph?

TEACHER COMMENTS: