



10 Tips for Stronger Essays

Edmund Casey Hall 102
writingcentre@stu.ca
@writeatstu

1. Read and understand the instructions.

Instructions usually indicate

- the type of assignment
- how to formulate your thesis statement
- how to structure your essay

Example

Cause & Effect Essay Question

e.g. What impact does the process of modernization have on a society?
[i.e. discuss effects, one at a time]

Compare/Contrast Essay Question

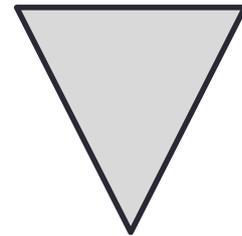
e.g. Discuss the views on death in *Hamlet* and the *Apology*. How do they compare?
[i.e. discuss similarities and differences in their perspective on each issue]

Argumentative Essay Question

e.g. Should imprisonment be the main focus in responding to domestic violence cases? [i.e. give your opinion, yes or no] Why or why not? [i.e. give reasons and evidence to support your opinion]

2. Provide a helpful introduction.

- provide some background info on topic (e.g. basic definitions)
- give a reason or motivation for your paper (i.e. why is the topic significant or worthy of study?)
- sentences should start more general and gradually get more specific



3. Have a thesis statement that matches the body of your paper.

A thesis

- usually appears at the end of the introduction
- identifies the topic or claim of your essay
- lists main ideas in the order they will be discussed in your essay

Example

Argumentative Essay Question: Should we reduce environmental interventions or increase them?

Thesis: To address environmental concerns, some argue that we should reduce the level of human intervention; others think we need to increase our interventions. **I argue that we need to [opinion] because [reason 1], [reason 2], [reason 3].**

Body of Paper

Section 1: summarize ethics/normative perspective behind reducing interventions

Section 2: summarize ethics/normative perspective behind increasing interventions

Section 3: your opinion and reasons for it

4. Discuss 1 main idea per body paragraph.

- helps avoid repetition
- makes your ideas stand out, appear distinct
- helps the reader see connections/links between ideas

5. Start each body paragraph with a topic sentence.

A topic sentence

- is the first sentence in the paragraph
- introduces the main topic discussed in that paragraph

e.g. Sewage systems have also played a role in human migration and settlement.

e.g. First, Machiavelli counsels the Prince to use fear to govern his people.

6. Support your ideas.

- provide explanations, examples, definitions, and details (especially from your sources) for each point you make

(Good) Example

[topic sentence] Despite the fact that farming takes place in rural areas, rural residents face several barriers to accessing fresh, healthy and affordable food.

[1st point] The first barrier is a lack of grocery stores in rural areas. **[explanation]** These communities have a lower population density **[definition]** (i.e. fewer people per square kilometer), which makes it harder for them to attract large grocery chains that provide easy access to food at low prices (McEntee, 2011). Furthermore, smaller independently-owned grocery stores have been closing in these communities. **[example]** For instance, in Iowa, “43 percent of grocery stores in towns with populations less than 1,000 have closed” (Procter, 2010, p. 7), and **[example]** in Kansas, one in five rural grocery stores went out of business between 2006 and 2010 (Bailey, 2010). **[explanation]** As a result, rural residents’ access to readily available food is limited even further.

[2nd point] A second barrier is the remote location of these communities. **[explanation]** This results in less frequent shipments of food and often in a smaller selection of perishable products, **[example]** like fruit and vegetables. **[more explanation]** The remote location of these communities also leads to higher transportation costs for food, which means a higher mark-up on items in store.

[3rd point] Finally, low-income rural residents face a barrier in accessing emergency food sources, **[example]** such as food banks and community kitchens, **[explanation]** since many food programs run by non-profits and government organizations operate out of city centres (Blanchard & Lyson, 2006). **[more explanation]** This leaves the most vulnerable population even more vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition.

(Bad) Example

Why are green jobs desirable? Is that even a serious question? Mayer Hillman, author of *the Suicidal Planet* predicts that by the end of the century, global temperatures could rise 10°F, and even if temperatures rise only half that, many species could face extinction and much of the earth's surface could become uninhabitable. As humans, our appetite for energy is growing, too. Since the industrial revolution, the economy has been rapidly growing to keep up with the rise in the living standards of the ever-growing population. Due to the increasing economic activity, an increase in energy has also come about.

TOO MANY TOPICS

FIRST SENTENCE DOES NOT INTRODUCE THEM

7. Integrate your sources.

1. **first, introduce the idea, author or source in your own words**

2. **then paraphrase the source**

- the meaning should be the same, but the phrasing must be *significantly* different
- change the wording
- change the sentence structure (i.e. order of info in sentence)

or quote the original

- copy the words and punctuation exactly
- put double quotation marks before/after quote
- see *Using Quotations* handout for more tips

3. **finally, explain or interpret the source**

- what is the author saying?
- why is it significant to your paper/topic?

Example

1. Furthermore, smaller independently-owned grocery stores have been closing in these communities. 2. For instance, in Iowa, “43 percent of grocery stores in towns with populations less than 1,000 have closed” (Procter, 2010, p. 7), and in Kansas, one in five rural grocery stores went out of business between 2006 and 2010 (Bailey, 2010). 3. As a result, rural residents’ access to readily available food is limited even further.

8. Cite your sources.

2 parts to citing:

- in-text citation
 - citation appears at the end of the sentence, before the period
 - cite both quotations and paraphrases
- bibliography
 - starts on a new page (usually last page)
 - lists all sources you used
 - contains complete publication information about each source

9. Use transition signals.

- begin each new point in a paragraph with a transition signal (e.g. *first, second, finally, in addition, also, moreover*)
- see ***List of Connecting Words*** for more transition signals

Example

Despite the fact that farming takes place in rural areas, rural residents face several barriers to accessing fresh, healthy and affordable food. The **first** barrier is a lack of grocery stores in rural areas. These communities have a lower population density (i.e. fewer people per square kilometer), which makes it harder for them to attract large grocery chains that provide easy access to food at low prices (McEntee, 2011). **Furthermore**, smaller independently-owned grocery stores have been closing in these communities. **For instance**, in Iowa, “43 percent of grocery stores in towns with populations less than 1,000 have closed” (Procter, 2010, p. 7), and in Kansas, one in five rural grocery stores went out of business between 2006 and 2010 (Bailey, 2010). **As a result**, rural residents’ access to readily available food is limited even further. A **second** barrier is the remote location of these communities. This results in less frequent shipments of food and often in less selection of perishable products, like fruit and vegetables. The remote location of these communities **also** leads to higher transportation costs for food, which means a higher mark-up on items in store. **Finally**, low-income rural residents face a barrier in accessing emergency food sources, **such as** food banks and community kitchens, since many food programs run by non-profits and government organizations operate out of city centres (Blanchard & Lyson, 2006). This leaves the most vulnerable population even more vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition.

10. Visit the Writing Centre!

- book an appointment online <http://writingcentre.stu.ca>
- book early – especially for mid-term or end of term assignments
- up to two 50-minute appointments per week, availability permitting

Tips - Review

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4. Discuss 1 main idea per body paragraph.
5. Start each body paragraph with a topic sentence.
6. Support your ideas.
7. Integrate your sources.
8. Cite your sources.
9. Use transition signals.
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