

Essay Writing: Essential Skills Student Review Guide

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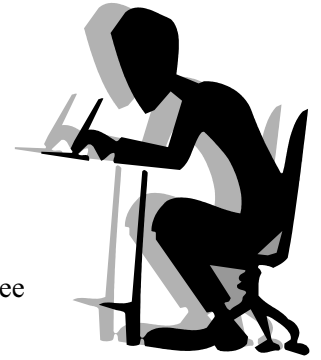
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Understanding the Prompt

Section 1.1 Choosing a Prompt



Three basic categories of essays are narrative, expository, and persuasive. One of these three categories of essays is often required as a response to prompt given by a teacher in the classroom or by a state-required writing test. The purpose of this book is to help you, the student, master the steps for writing basic narrative, expository, and persuasive essays in response to given writing prompts.

Writing a good essay is a process that involves planning, writing, and rewriting. This book will take you through that process step-by-step so that you can gain the knowledge you need for planning, writing, revising, and editing all three types of essays.

Teaching Prompts

For teaching purposes, we will use the following three prompts to show you how to plan, to write, to revise, and to edit each type of essay. Notice that one prompt is expository, one is narrative, and one is persuasive. They are different from the prompts you will use to write. We will go through the entire essay-writing process using these three prompts, and you will be asked to apply the same steps to your own essays from the prompts that you will choose for your writing.



Expository Teaching Prompt A

Think about things you like or dislike about your school rules. Explain how you feel about some of these rules. Be sure to give specific examples and/or reasons to explain your opinion.

Narrative Teaching Prompt B

Think of a time from your early childhood that made a lasting impression on you, or think about a childhood memory that you will never forget. Choose one of these times and write a story about what happened. Be sure to include precise details in your response.

Persuasive Teaching Prompt C

You have been dreaming of a car of your own for several years and have saved most of the money to make your dream come true. Since you will be a junior in the fall, you would like to start the year by driving to school in your new car. Write a letter persuading your parents to help you buy a car of your own. Be sure to include convincing reasons and specific examples in your writing.

Choosing Your Prompt

On a writing test, you may be given a choice of writing prompts that represent the different categories of essays. When given the choice of two or more prompts, consider your choice carefully. You may want to pick the one that interests you the most or will be the easiest for you to write. When picking your prompt, you may also want to think about which prompt represents the category of writing that you write best. For example, if you feel you write stories the best, then pick the prompt that would be narrative. If you are good at writing persuasive essays, use the persuasive prompt.

Understanding the Prompt

Section 1.3 Writing on the Topic



Another extremely important part of responding to a writing prompt is writing on the assigned topic. Be sure that you understand what the writing prompt wants you to write about. If it is asking you to write about one thing and you write about something else instead, you will not meet standards because your essay will be off-topic. It is vital that you know what to do with the prompt you are being asked to write. Once again, you will have plenty of practice in this book to make sure that you understand what to write when given each type of writing prompt.

Let's look again at the teaching prompts we will be using throughout this book. Read the examples below to help you understand what would be considered on-topic versus what might be considered off-topic.

Expository Teaching Prompt A

Think about things you like or dislike about your school rules. Explain how you feel about some of these rules. Be sure to give specific examples and/or reasons to support your opinion.

First, what is this prompt asking? It is asking you to write an essay that informs or explains what you like or dislike about some aspect of your school rules. So, what can you write about? What should you not write about?

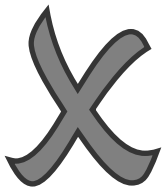
Example 1: Look at the following introductory paragraph for an essay on school rules.



At my school, we have many rules for students to follow. We have rules telling us what we can and cannot do in the classroom. We have rules telling us what we can and cannot do in the halls. We even have rules telling us what we can and cannot do outside the school building on the school grounds. Of all these rules, I appreciate the rules that tell us what we can and cannot do in the classroom, but I do not agree with the rules that tell us what we can and cannot do in the halls and on school grounds.

The rest of this essay goes on to describe the specific rules this student does not like. Notice that this essay is on-topic because it talks about school rules that this student dislikes.

Example 2: Look at the following introductory paragraph for an essay that strays off the topic.



School is like life. It has rules. Life has all kinds of rules. For example, you cannot steal, you cannot kill people, and you cannot even drive as fast in your car as you would like. Even though rules are necessary, not all rules are fair. I agree that people should not steal and kill, but I think people should be able to drive as fast as they want without having to worry about getting a ticket.

Can you see why this essay is headed off-topic? This essay is about rules in life, not the rules in school. The prompt doesn't give this much leeway. It asks for the student to write about school rules, not rules in general. If this essay continues off-track as indicated by this introductory paragraph, it would not meet standards.

Section 1.3, continued

Writing on the Topic

Example 3: Look at the following introductory paragraph for an essay that is off-topic by not answering the prompt.



Out of all the rules at our school, the ones that I dislike the most concern the dress code. We should be allowed to dress any way that we like. The dress code does not allow us to dress individually and express our creativity. I think most teachers would agree that creativity is important and should not be suppressed. Just think about what would happen if students could no longer be creative.



This essay goes on to talk about student creativity and why it is important. It continues to relate creativity to how a student dresses. Even though this essay begins talking about the dress code, it is off-topic for several reasons. First, the prompt asks the student to discuss *some* rules and to give examples. This essay mentions only the dress code in general and does not give specific rules about the dress code. Secondly, it gives no specific examples. Finally, the essay strays off on a tangent about student creativity, which is not the topic for the prompt.

In general, you should see that this expository prompt gives a great deal of leeway. We could write an essay about school rules that we like, school rules that we do not like, or a combination of both. We could write about why we would or would not change these rules.

On the other hand, this prompt specifically instructs us to write about more than one school rule, so we should make sure we include more than one. Our essay should give examples and details about the school rules that we choose to discuss. We should not write about rules in general or stray by writing about something other than the school rules.

Now, let's look at the narrative teaching prompt.

Narrative Teaching Prompt B

Think of a time from your early childhood that made a lasting impression on you, or think about a childhood memory that you will never forget. Choose one of these times and write a story about what happened. Be sure to include precise details in your response.

What is this prompt asking? It is asking us to write a story about a childhood memory.

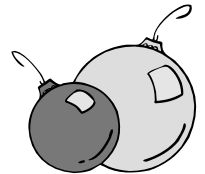
Example 4: Look at the following excerpt for an essay on a childhood memory.



I will never forget the Christmas of 1994 when I was only eight years old. My older sister, younger brother, and I had been wanting bicycles for months. We made our wishes for Christmas clear often. I even remember our discussing it during Thanksgiving dinner. The day after Thanksgiving something happened to make us forget about our material desires for Christmas.

Early that Friday morning Mother answered the phone; she was shaking when she told us the bad news about our cousin Todd being in a serious car wreck. He was in Intensive Care and might not survive. . . .

We visited the hospital many times that weekend even though we could not see him. . . .



Section 1.3, continued

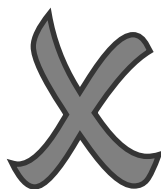
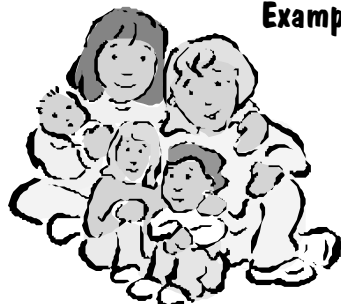
Writing on the Topic

We went to see him on Christmas Eve. He had been improving slowly, but that day he was so much better that he was to be released the next day. . . .

On Christmas Day, we got our bicycles, but all we could think of was going to my aunt and uncle's to see Todd. He was at home for the first time in a month and lucky to be alive.

This essay is on-topic because it tells the childhood memory of the cousin's almost fatal injuries and his recovery. It tells the story of what happened over Thanksgiving holiday — the call, the injuries, the poor prognosis. Then the story ends with the cousin's release from the hospital and his amazing recovery. It is told in chronological order and is a series of events about Todd's wreck and recovery.

Example 5: Now look at an example of an introductory paragraph that is off-topic.



Growing up was fun for me because I came from a large family with many sisters and brothers. As the third of eight children, I was very proud of my family. A family as large as ours was unusual in our fairly small town. Our unusual last name added to our being well-known in our town.

This introductory paragraph is off-topic first because it strays to talking about being proud of the large family. Then it strays further by telling how unusual the family was for its size and its name. The paragraph had begun well by telling that it was fun growing up in a large family and could have continued to tell an incident that was fun, but it did not.

Example 6: Here's another excerpt from an essay that is off-topic.



I will never forget my first pet. He was an especially beautiful German shepherd, and I named him Sport. German shepherds are always big dogs, and that was one reason I picked him. I really do not like little dogs. There is something so appealing about big dogs that is missing in little ones. Somehow they seem more lovable. That is why I have the brown lab I have now.

My lab, Chance, is amazingly smart. . . .

I do not know what I would do without Chance. I have only had him for two years, but I remember the pain of losing Sport, who was hit by a car. I do not want to go through that any time soon.



The introductory paragraph is off-topic because the writer strays from a childhood memory of the first pet to the preference for bigger dogs. Then it strays even more and begins talking about the present pet. The prompt asked for a specific event or a series of events from childhood, but the essay talks about sizes of dogs and the dog owned now. The prompt asked for a childhood memory, but the writer did not give that.

Section 1.3, continued

Writing on the Topic

Persuasive Teaching Prompt C

You have been dreaming of a car of your own for several years and have saved most of the money to make your dream come true. Since you will be a junior in the fall, you would like to start the school year by driving to school in your new car. Write a letter persuading your parents to help you buy a car of your own. Be sure to include convincing reasons and specific examples in your writing.

What is this prompt asking the writer to do? It is asking the writer to write a letter that would convince his/her parents to help buy a car.

Example 7: Look at the following excerpt for a persuasive essay for this topic.



Dear Mom and Dad,

Since I have been saving my money for so long to buy a car, I hope you will agree to help me. I don't have quite enough saved yet, and I would be forever in your debt if you will help me buy the car I want. . . .

I have worked very hard to save the money, and I will continue to work to be able to pay for the upkeep on my car. I will be very responsible and buy my own gas and oil and anything else my car needs. I will come home on time and drive safely wherever I go. I will obey all the traffic laws and be very careful so that I won't be the cause of an accident. . . .

. . . If you can find it in your hearts to help me, you won't be sorry because I will prove that I am worthy of your help.

This excerpt is on topic because it asks for help and then gives examples of what would be done by the writer if the parents will help buy the car. It also stresses how appreciative the writer will be if the help is given, so it is a persuasive essay.

Example 8: Look at the following excerpt for a persuasive essay that is off-topic.



Dear Mom and Dad,

I really need help buying a car, but I know that you will not help me. I have not proved myself in the past, so I know that asking you now is almost pointless. I really did not mean to lose your trust when I told you that I would be home on Sunday evening, and then I didn't come home until Monday morning. I didn't have a way home, and I didn't want to call and bother you.

I also know that having the accident in your car is not going to improve my chances of getting you to help me buy my own car either. I know that I should have been paying attention to where I was going, but it didn't work out that way. My friends were talking, and I just didn't hear the man blow the horn until it was too late. I didn't see the red light because I was looking at something in a store window. . . .

This excerpt is off-topic because it really does not ask the parents for help, and it gives all the reasons why they would not help. Just including the words from the prompt in the letter does not help if the writer doesn't really try to convince with good reasons and examples. This writer is doomed from the start because he/she doesn't really expect help according to the examples used.

Planning The Essay

Section 3.1 Introducing the Parts of an Essay



Now that you have practiced writing paragraphs, you should be ready to start on the essay. When you write an essay, you have to write several paragraphs and use transitions to connect the paragraphs. Writing an essay takes a little more planning than writing a paragraph, but they are still similar in the way they are constructed. For example, both have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

Good Paragraph	Good Essay	
Topic Sentence: It is a sentence that introduces the paragraph and indicates what will be included in the paragraph. This sentence is the controlling idea of the paragraph.	Introductory Paragraph: It is the first paragraph of an essay and introduces the topic of the essay. Thesis Sentence: It is usually the concluding sentence in the introductory paragraph. It indicates what the entire essay will include. This sentence is the controlling idea for the essay.	Beginning
Body: It includes several idea, reason, or action sentences supported by example or detail sentences. Each sentence supports the topic sentence.	Body: It includes paragraphs that support the thesis sentence with ideas, actions, or reasons.	Middle
Conclusion Sentence: It is a sentence that concludes the paragraph.	Conclusion Paragraph: It is a paragraph that concludes the essay.	End

As you can see, writing an essay is similar to writing a good paragraph. However, an essay is expanded into three to five paragraphs or more. A five paragraph essay is often a good choice, and these paragraphs should represent a clear beginning, middle, and end. Please understand that essays written for various purposes may not have exactly five paragraphs, but writing a five paragraph essay is often appropriate when addressing a writing prompt.

You will also use what you've learned about writing a single paragraph as you write each paragraph for your essay. Each paragraph in your essay should have all the elements of a good paragraph: a topic sentence, supporting idea and example sentences, and a conclusion sentence.

Writing a First Draft

Section 4.1 Writing the Introduction



In a standard five paragraph essay, the first paragraph will be the introduction. You will begin this introductory paragraph with a topic sentence just as you practiced in Section 2 on writing paragraphs. However, your introductory paragraph can be as short as three sentences. The second sentence in your introductory paragraph will explain or give additional information about your essay and can be followed by additional sentences giving even more information. Your final sentence, which is your conclusion sentence, will be your thesis sentence. Let's look at each of these parts of the introductory paragraph.

Topic Sentence

The topic sentence for your introductory paragraph should be easy to write. It can be a general statement addressing the general topic of the given prompt.

Our Expository Teaching Prompt A is about school rules, so a topic sentence might be a general statement about these rules. The examples below give some acceptable topic sentences for the expository prompt.

Example 1: *We need school rules because they are important.*

Example 2: *Our school has too many rules for students to follow.*

Example 3: *Rules are necessary in a school setting, and the dress code is an important part of the school rules.*

Notice that these sentences can be very general, or they can be a little more specific. The first and second examples are general statements about school rules. The third example starts out general but includes the specific detail regarding the dress code. Any of these can serve as a topic sentence for this expository prompt.

For your narrative essay, you may want to give a general introduction that leads into your story, or you may choose to use the introductory paragraph to begin your story. Depending on your approach, the type of topic sentence will vary.

Our Narrative Teaching Prompt B is about a childhood memory. Look at the examples below for possible topic sentences for this prompt. Again, notice that the topic sentence can be general or specific.

Example 4: *I have many pleasant memories of growing up.*

Example 5: *My favorite memory growing up is the time I played cops and robbers with my brother.*

Example 6: *One autumn day, I got the idea to play cops and robbers when I found two really long sticks in the woods behind my grandparents' house.*

Any of these sentences would be acceptable. Example 4 is very general and could be used to write a general introduction that will lead into the story. Example 5 is more specific and could be used to lead into the story or to begin the story. Example 6 begins the narration by introducing a specific childhood memory.

In a persuasive essay, it is very important that you make your position clear in the introductory paragraph. You can do that in the topic sentence, or you can state it in one of the other sentences in your introductory paragraph. The next examples show possible topic sentences for our Persuasive Teaching Prompt C.

Section 4.1, continued

Writing the Introduction

Example 7: *Saving money to buy a car takes a long time.*

Example 8: *I've saved most of the money to buy the car that I want to drive to school.*

Example 9: *As you both know, I have been saving for a long time to buy a car of my own; however, I'm still a few thousand dollars away from reaching my goal.*

As with the other examples, any of these would be acceptable topic sentences for our persuasive prompt. Example 7 is a very general sentence that could be used to introduce the topic. Example 8 is a little more specific. Example 9 specifically addresses the parents whom the writer hopes to convince to provide help. The “position” that the writer is instructed by the prompt to take is to convince the parents to help buy the car. None of these sentences reveals this position yet, but all of them are leading up to it.

Note: You may have learned in the past that you should start an essay with an “attention grabber” for the first sentence. Using a shocking statement, quote, question, joke, etc. is a great way to start an essay; however, it is also an advanced writing skill. Once you master the basics, you may desire to learn advanced skills for writing truly great essays. This type of advanced skill is beyond the scope of this book. The purpose of this book is to help you write an essay that shows you have basic writing skills necessary for life outside of school. So, we will concentrate on the basics.

Practice 1

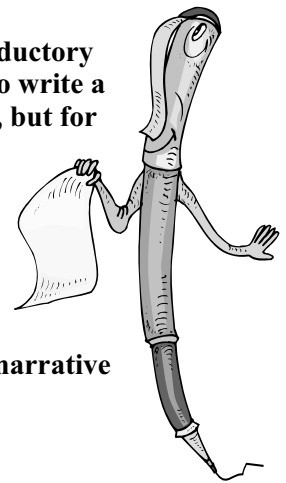
Open to page E-10 of your Student Essay Booklet where you will begin writing your introductory paragraph for your expository essay. Use your brainstorming ideas on page E-4 and E-7 to write a topic sentence for your expository essay. You may decide to revise this topic sentence later, but for now, do your best to write a good topic sentence for your expository prompt.

Practice 2

Open to page E-11 of your Student Essay Booklet where you will begin writing your introductory paragraph for your narrative essay. Use your brainstorming ideas on page E-5 and E-8 to write a topic sentence for your narrative essay. You may decide to revise this topic sentence later, but for now, do your best to write a good topic sentence for your narrative prompt.

Practice 3

Open to page E-12 of your Student Essay Booklet where you will begin writing your introductory paragraph for your persuasive essay. Use your brainstorming ideas on page E-6 and E-9 to write a topic sentence for your persuasive essay. You may decide to revise this topic sentence later, but for now, do your best to write a good topic sentence for your persuasive prompt.



Writing Supporting Sentences

After your topic sentence, write one or more sentences to support your topic sentence. You might want to give your opinion or feelings about the topic, or you might give general information that you want the reader to know. You will also want to make a transition to your thesis statement. Remember, your introductory paragraph needs to contain at least three sentences, but having only three sentences can be okay. The purpose of the introductory paragraph is to introduce your essay and not to write a lot of sentences for the sake of filling up space. The sentence between your topic sentence and your thesis statement may be a single sentence that gives a logical transition between the topic sentence and the thesis.

Section 4.1, continued

Writing the Introduction

Look at the example that follows. It shows how a student might take the topic sentence from Example 1 and write additional sentences that support this general topic.

Example 10: *We need school rules because they are important. Rules help to keep us safe and promote responsibility. They should be designed to benefit all students and to help the school be a better place to learn. However, some of the rules we have do not fit into either category, and they need to be changed.*

In this introductory paragraph, the student writes three additional sentences explaining why school rules are important but also adds that some rules need to be changed. Notice how these sentences give the student's feelings about school rules. The last sentence is leading into the thesis, which we will discuss next.

The introductory paragraph for a narrative essay is done the same way. In the example below, we see how a student might add to the topic sentence from Example 4 to continue the general introduction of the story.

Example 11: *I have many pleasant memories of growing up. Most center around playing at home with my brother and my sister.*

This introductory paragraph has only one additional sentence after the topic sentence. This sentence gives more specific information about the student's memory of growing up. Having one "transitional" sentence between your topic sentence and your thesis is okay.

The introductory paragraph for a persuasive essay is done much the same way as the other two, but a key difference is that the writer's position should be clearly stated. In the example below, a student adds sentences to the topic sentence given in Example 7.

Example 12: *Saving money to buy a car takes a long time. I've saved most of the money to buy the car that I want to drive to school, but I still need a little more to get the one I want. To get a car of my own, I will need help financially.*

The introductory paragraph has two transitional sentences to help the student lead into the main idea or thesis statement. Notice that the last sentence states the writer's position that he or she will need financial help to buy a car. This last sentence will also lead into the thesis.

Practice 4

Go back to page E-10 of your Student Essay Booklet. For the introductory paragraph to your expository essay, add at least one more sentence to support your topic sentence and to transition into your thesis statement. You may want to add or revise your supporting sentence(s) once you have written your thesis statement.

Practice 5

Go back to page E-11 of your Student Essay Booklet. For the introductory paragraph to your narrative essay, add at least one more sentence to support your topic sentence and to transition into your thesis statement. You may want to add or revise your supporting sentence(s) once you have written your thesis statement.

Practice 6

Go back to page E-12 of your Student Essay Booklet. For the introductory paragraph to your persuasive essay, add at least one more sentence to support your topic sentence, to clearly state your position, and to transition into your thesis statement. You may want to add or revise your supporting sentence(s) once you have written your thesis statement.

Section 4.1, continued

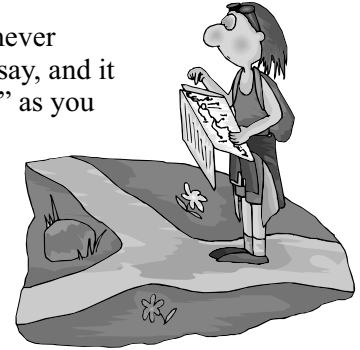
Writing the Introduction

Writing a Thesis Statement

The last sentence of your introductory paragraph should be your **thesis statement**. A thesis statement is the controlling idea for the entire essay. A thesis statement serves the same purpose for an essay as a topic sentence serves for a paragraph. The thesis statement will tell the reader what the essay will include.

Think of your thesis statement like a road map. If you are traveling to a place you have never been, you need a road map to help guide you there. Your thesis statement guides your essay, and it tells the reader where you are going. It should also help keep you on-topic and “on track” as you write your essay.

Focus: To write a thesis statement, you first must determine the focus of your essay. The prompt gives you a general topic, but it will be up to you to determine a specific focus. The focus narrows the general topic of the prompt into a specific topic with a definite purpose. You will use your brainstorming ideas to determine the purpose and topic of your focus.



You may remember that for the Expository Teaching Prompt A, we decided to narrow our ideas to three rules that need to be changed in the dress code. Notice that the prompt does not tell you to write about rules that need to be changed. A student could write about why certain rules are important or why some rules are more necessary than others. Any of these ideas could be the focus of the essay. In the example below, the focus is on rules that need to be changed. In this example, the student thinks the tardy rule, the book bag rule, and the fifteen-minute rule need to be changed.

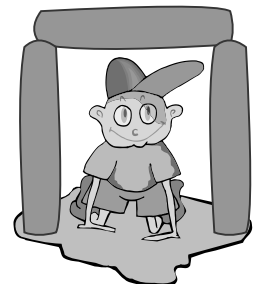
Example 13: *We need school rules because they are important. Rules help to keep us safe and promote responsibility. They should be designed to benefit all students and to help the school be a better place to learn. However, some of the rules we have do not fit into either category, and they need to be changed. **If I could change some of the school rules, I would change the tardy rule, the book bag rule, and the fifteen-minute rule.***

Notice that the thesis statement explains the focus of the essay. In this case, the focus is on three rules that need to be changed. The specific purpose is to change rules. The specific topic gives which rules. The rest of the essay will discuss each rule and explain why each needs to be changed.

For the Narrative Teaching Prompt B, we narrowed our ideas to one specific memory of playing at our grandparents’ house and three events that occurred in that memory. The prompt gives students freedom to write about any childhood memory. Since this is a narrative prompt, a student could choose to write a story about a happy childhood memory, a sad one, an important one, a fun-filled one, or a funny one. In the example below, the focus is on a student’s pleasant childhood memory of the time she and her brother and sister used cushions to make pretend houses.

Example 14: *I have many pleasant memories of growing up. Most center around playing at home with my brother and my sister. **My favorite memory is the time we used the sofa and chair cushions to build pretend houses.***

Notice that this introductory paragraph is only three sentences long. The thesis sentence is the last sentence. It introduces the story to follow about the student’s childhood memory of making houses from cushions. The rest of the essay will tell a story about this memory.



Section 4.1, continued

Writing the Introduction

Persuasive Teaching Prompt C is similar to the expository prompt because we narrowed it down to three reasons why owning a car would be beneficial. However, the persuasive prompt is a little more limiting than the other two because the prompt states that the student is to write a letter to his/her parents to persuade them to help him or her to buy a car. The student does have the liberty to choose reasons and examples he or she feels would work best at persuasion. The example below focuses on the idea of the student's saving being insufficient and of the student needing financial help to buy a car.

Example 15: *Saving money to buy a car takes a long time. I've saved most of the money to buy the car that I want to drive to school, but I still need a little more to get the one I want. To get a car of my own, I will need help financially. **However, having my own car would allow me to drive myself wherever I have to go, to run errands to save you time, and to get a better job.***

This introductory paragraph includes four sentences and the last sentence is the thesis statement. As in the expository essay, the thesis statement explains the focus of the letter. The specific purpose is to persuade the parents to help the student get a car. The rest of the essay will be devoted to explaining and giving additional details about the three main reasons given in the thesis.

Practice 7

Read each prompt given below. Then read the sentences given below the prompt. If the sentence is an appropriate thesis sentence for the prompt, put a ✓ in the blank. If the sentence is not an appropriate thesis sentence, put an × in the blank.

Think about winning a million dollars in a lottery and what you could do with all that money. Explain what you would do with a million dollars. Give one or more examples of what you would do and support with specific details.

- _____ 1. The second thing would be to buy a large new house.
- _____ 2. A million dollars would make me so happy.
- _____ 3. With a million dollars, I could help all my family.

Think of a favorite movie or television program. Explain which movie or program you liked and give specific reasons why you enjoyed it. Be sure to support your reasons with specific details.

- _____ 4. My favorite television program is *Survivor* because I like to watch different types of people interact with others.
- _____ 5. My favorite movie of all time is *Crocodile Dundee*.
- _____ 6. I did not like the movie *Spirit* because it was too childish and too slow.

Think about things you regret — what you did or did not do and how you wish you could redo them. Pick one incident and write a story about what happened. Be sure to narrate an event or series of events and include specific details in your response.

- _____ 7. I broke an important promise to my best friend when I did not get up early to go help him.
- _____ 8. I wish I had not said what I did and hurt her feelings.
- _____ 9. Most people do things that they wish that they had not done.

Using Complete Sentences and Correct Punctuation

Section 6.2 Proofreading for Complete Sentences



This summer I babysitting for my niece and nephew. Who are three and five. Burt and Ariel were so sweet. Not much trouble at all. I loved watching them have fun playing, it reminded me of my childhood. Of course, they loved to run around and play outside. They swinging, climbing on the gym, and riding in the wagon. Inside loved to make "houses" out of sofa cushions and covers. Never could get the covers to stay as long as they played. They mainly played pretend games together they called themselves Mary and Salty. The games usually involved talking cars, monster trucks, witches, and princesses, they also enjoyed drawing. Whether they drew on paper or concrete. They never argued over crayons or chalk. Because Burt liked green and purple. Ariel red and blue. They would draw all sorts of pictures, I enjoyed watching them draw and play.

This is Jane's writing that contains fragments and run-ons. Can you pick out all the errors? Do you think you can revise this paragraph so that there are no fragments and run-ons? Can you identify the nine sentence fragments and four run-ons? If not, let's review complete sentences, fragments, and run-ons.

Complete Sentences

A **complete sentence** is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and makes a complete thought. The sentence must begin with a capital letter and end with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

Example 1: *The scientist studied the evidence.*

Scientist is the subject and *studied* is the verb; the whole sentence makes a complete thought.

There are four types of sentences.

Types of Sentences

Declarative	A declarative sentence makes a statement and ends with a period.	<i>He polished the stone.</i>
Interrogative	An interrogative sentence asks a question and ends with a question mark.	<i>Have you seen the movie?</i>
Exclamatory	An exclamatory sentence makes a strong statement and ends with an exclamation point.	<i>I won the lottery!</i>
Imperative	An imperative sentence makes a request or gives a command. It usually ends with a period. The subject is <i>you</i> , but it is understood. (You could have a one-word sentence with the subject understood.)	<i>Close the blinds.</i> The subject is <i>you</i> even though you don't say it. <i>Go!</i> This is a complete, one-word sentence. The subject is understood to be <i>you</i> , and it is a complete thought.

Section 6.2, continued

Proofreading for Complete Sentences



Fragments

A **fragment** is a part of a sentence or a mistake in writing.

Example 2: *The comedian on stage.* **Fragment**

Comedian could be the subject, but there is no verb. It is not a complete thought.

Example 3: *Told funny jokes.* **Fragment**

Told is the verb, but there is no subject. It is not a complete thought.

Example 4: *The comedian telling funny jokes.* **Fragment**

The *-ing* verb *telling* is not the main verb. An *-ing* verb must have a helping verb to be the main verb. It is not a complete sentence. You could add a helping verb to make it a sentence, such as “*The comedian was telling funny jokes.*”

Example 5: *On the top shelf of the bookcase beside the door.* **Fragment**

This example gives three prepositional phrases. There is neither a subject nor a verb. It is not a complete thought.

Example 6: *The garden planted by my brother.* **Fragment**

Since *garden* did not do the planting, it is not a complete thought as it is. You could make it a complete thought by saying, “*The garden was planted by my brother.*” or “*The garden planted by my brother impressed the neighbors.*”

Run-on Sentences

A **run-on sentence** is two or more sentences put together incorrectly without a period, a conjunction, or a semicolon.

Example 7: *The comedian walked onto stage he told a funny story.* **Run-on**

This run-on sentence contains two complete thoughts. It is a run-on since the thoughts are not separated by a period, a conjunction, or a semicolon.

It can be corrected in three different ways:

1. *The comedian walked onto stage. He told a funny story.* **Two Complete Sentences**

You can separate the two thoughts into two sentences with a period.

2. *The comedian walked onto stage; he told a funny story.* **One Complete Sentence**

You can separate the two thoughts by a semicolon.

Section 6.2, continued
Proofreading for Complete Sentences

3. *The comedian walked onto stage, and he told a funny story.* **One Complete Sentence**

You can separate the two thoughts by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

Conjunctions, such as *and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*, can be used to join two sentences. *Just using a comma without the conjunction would still be wrong.*

Practice 1

Label each group of words: *S* for *sentence*, *F* for *fragment*, or *R* for *run-on*. For fragments and run-ons, make them a complete sentence in the space provided.

Examples:

F	Been tired today.	<u>I have been tired today</u>
R	Sam moved all the chairs, then he mopped.	<u>Sam moved all the chairs, and then he mopped.</u>
S	Jen bought new sheets; she put them on her bed.	<u></u>
	1. Is he here?	<u></u>
	2. Jamie lifting the weights.	<u></u>
	3. They were excited they were jumping and screaming.	<u></u>
	4. On the leaf of the plant in the blue pot.	<u></u>
	5. Take a picture of us.	<u></u>
	6. Sandra cheered.	<u></u>
	7. She painted trees, they were beautiful.	<u></u>
	8. We put up the tent; it took an hour.	<u></u>
	9. Carried in the wagon, the heavy tools.	<u></u>
	10. Playing the difficult video game.	<u></u>
	11. She smiled she knew the answer.	<u></u>
	12. Added on the calculator.	<u></u>
	13. The ball was plastic.	<u></u>
	14. The pigs squealed.	<u></u>
	15. Open the window.	<u></u>

Section 6.2, continued

Proofreading for Complete Sentences

Practice 2

Look again at Jane’s writing. Find her sentence errors (fragments and run-ons) and rewrite the paragraph correctly in the space below. Include correct punctuation. Remember, there are nine fragments and four run-ons to be corrected.

This summer I babysitting for my niece and nephew. Who are three and five. Burt and Ariel were so sweet. Not much trouble at all. I loved watching them have fun playing, it reminded me of my childhood. Of course, they loved to run around and play outside. They swinging, climbing on the gym, and riding in the wagon. Inside loved to make “houses” out of sofa cushions and covers. Never could get the covers to stay as long as they played. They mainly played pretend games together they called themselves Mary and Salty. The games usually involved talking cars, monster trucks, witches, and princesses, they also enjoyed drawing. Whether they drew on paper or concrete. They never argued over crayons or chalk. Because Burt liked green and purple. Ariel red and blue. They would draw all sorts of pictures, I enjoyed watching them draw and play.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Practice 3

Go back to pages E-19 and E-20 of your Student Essay Booklet where you have the draft of your expository essay. Check your expository essay for complete sentences. If you find an error, mark it out and write the correction in the space above the sentence.

Practice 4

Go back to pages E-21 and E-22 of your Student Essay Booklet where you have the draft of your narrative essay. Check your narrative essay for complete sentences. If you find an error, mark it out and write the correction in the space above the sentence.

Practice 5

Go back to pages E-23 and E-24 of your Student Essay Booklet where you have the draft of your persuasive essay. Check your persuasive essay for complete sentences. If you find an error, mark it out and write the correction in the space above the sentence.

Writing Effective Sentences

Section 10.3 Rewriting Your Final Essays

Congratulations! You have finished writing, editing, and proofreading your essays. The only thing left to do is to rewrite your essays in final form.

Review the checklist below. Have you checked your essays for all of these items? If so, you should have essays that would meet or exceed the requirements for most writing tests.



Writer's Checklist

1. ☐ Did I write about the topic?
2. ☐ Does my expository essay explain, does my narrative essay tell a story, and does my persuasive essay convince?
3. ☐ Did I write a thesis statement?
4. ☐ Did I include only those details that support my thesis?
5. ☐ Does my essay have a clear beginning, middle, and end?
6. ☐ Did I write a topic sentence for each paragraph?
7. ☐ Did I write my ideas in an order that is clear for the reader to follow?
8. ☐ Did I maintain the same point of view throughout my response?
9. ☐ Did I organize and use transitions?
10. ☐ Did I use one clear controlling idea and not wander from it?
11. ☐ Did I use precise words?
12. ☐ Did I use complete sentences?
13. ☐ Did I use a variety of sentences?
14. ☐ Did I check my essay for correct mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling)?
15. ☐ Did I check my essay for correct usage (verb use, subject/verb agreement, pronoun use, adjective/adverb use)?
16. ☐ Did I print or write clearly?

Notice the last item in the checklist. Your handwriting must be legible for the essay readers to read and score. If the essay readers cannot read your essay, they cannot grade it. Therefore, make sure you write clearly. You may want to print your final version, or if you write in cursive, make sure it is neat and readable. Take your time when rewriting your essay.