**Quick Tips for Writing**

A **Answer the question.**

\*Be sure you restate the question in your answer.

C **Cite your sources.**

\*If you used information from a source other than yourself, you must tell your reader. This is when you should use words like “According to the article…”

E **Explain the evidence.**

\*Now that you have included evidence from your source, you must explain it. This is when you should use words like “This proves…,” or “This is important because.”

D **Don’t forget the conclusion.**

\*Now that you have answered the question, cited your sources and explained your evidence, you must summarize your entire essay with a strong conclusion that leaves your reader with a clear understanding of your answer to the prompt.

**A typical essay should be at least five (5) paragraphs.**

* Five (5) paragraphs allows you to have:
* an introductory paragraph (1)
* body paragraph (2)
* body paragraph (3)
* body paragraph (4)
* a conclusion (5)

**Introductory Paragraph**

An introduction typically has three main elements. Each of these components can be a sentence each, but can certainly be longer.

**Hook:** A hook is an attention grabber. It may provide a general example or very brief anecdote which sets the tone for the essay and creates reader interest. *It should not ask a question or end with an exclamation point.*

**Context:** The context provides a “bridge” to the thesis. It moves the reader from the general statements provided in the hook, to the specific points made in the thesis.

*Thesis:* This is the crux of the argument. This is the claim the author makes which he/she will support with the rest of the essay.

**In an Introduction Paragraph:**

* Do not apologize. Never suggest that you don't know what you're talking about or that you're not enough of an expert in this matter that your opinion would matter. Your reader will quickly turn to something else. Avoid phrases like the following:

In my [humble] opinion . . .  
I'm not sure about this, but . . .

* Do not announce your intentions. Do not flatly announce what you are about to do in an essay.

In this paper I will . . .   
The purpose of this essay is to . . .

Get into the topic and let your reader perceive your purpose in the topic sentence of your beginning paragraph.

* Do not use a dictionary or encyclopedia definition.

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary,  
a widget is . . .

Although definitions are extremely useful and it might serve your purpose to devise your own definition(s) later in the essay, you want to avoid using this clichéd beginning to an essay.

**Thesis Statement**

* tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion.
* tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
* directly answers the question asked of you. A thesis is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself.
* makes a claim that others might dispute.
* is usually a single sentence somewhere in your first paragraph that presents your argument to the reader.

*Once you have written your thesis, you should ask yourself the following:*

* **Did I answer the question?** Re-reading the question/prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix a position that misses the focus of the question.
* **Is my thesis statement specific enough?** Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like “good” or “successful,” see if you could be more specific: *why* is something “good”; *what specifically* makes something “successful”?
* ***Does my thesis pass the “So what?” test*?** If a reader’s first response is, “So what?” then you need to clarify or to connect to a larger issue.
* **Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering***?* If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. Remember, always reevaluate and revise your writing as necessary.

**Does my thesis pass the “how and why?” test?** If a reader’s first response is “how?” or “why?” your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

**Body Paragraphs**

**Insert a Topic Sentence**

In academic essays they often appear at the beginning.

Ask yourself:

* + What is happening in your paragraph?
  + Why you have chosen to include the information you have?
  + Why is the paragraph important in the context of your argument or thesis statement? What point are your trying to make?

**Explain Your Topic Sentence**

* Does it require further explanation?

**Introduce Your Evidence**

When using a quote, be sure to:

* Identify the source (Ex: According to the article, “Facebook making drones, satellites and lasers to deliver Internet,” by Salvador Rodriquez…)
* Summarize to provide context.
* The following words can be used to introduce a quote:

asserts, believes, claims, comments, confirms, declares, defines, describes, explains, indicates, makes

clear, proposes, etc.

**Explain Your Evidence**

Your evidence won’t explain itself. You must tell the reader the reason this evidence is an important addition to your essay.

**Insert a Concluding Sentence**

End your paragraph with a sentence or sentences that restates how your paragraph adds to your whole essay.

**Transitions Words and Phrases**

Transitional words and phrases help create powerful links between ideas in your paper and can help your reader understand the logic of your paper.

\*Be sure to use your “Transition Words and Phrases” Sheet to create these strong connections.

**Conclusion Paragraph**

* A conclusion is what you will leave with your reader.
* It "wraps up" your essay.
* It demonstrates to the reader that you accomplished what you set out to do.
* It shows how you have proved your thesis.
* It provides the reader with a sense of closure on the topic.

**For an effective conclusion:**

* Ask yourself “Why is this important?” “Why should anyone care?”
* Return to the theme(s) in the introduction.
* Summarize
* Pull it all together

**Review/Revise/Edit**

* Review your introduction. Make sure your thesis statement gives your reader a clear indication as to what they are about to read.
* Make sure your paper is organized. Does your paper have a nice flow? Are there any sentences that seem to be misplaced?
* Clarify and remove repetitive language. Look for repeating ideas, phrases and words. Use a thesaurus to help you use more advanced vocabulary.
* Check for smooth transitions that strengthen your essay.
* Make sure your conclusion is strong and efficient. Don’t introduce any new information and be sure your reader isn’t left with questions.
* Proofread your work. Check for the following:
* Spelling mistakes
* Grammar errors
* Punctuation
* Extra spaces

**Remember the following tips when writing an essay:**

* Indent
* Follow the format. When in doubt, use 12 point, Times New Roman Font.
* Put your heading- name, date, and class period- at the top right side of the paper.
* Use an academic tone
* Do not say “things” and “stuff.” Use the actual name of the noun.
* Do not say “a lot” unless you are talking about an actual piece of property.
* Do not say “you.” Instead, you can say “one” or “a person.”
* Do not use an exclamation point unless you are quoting someone who is yelling.
* Do not ask questions.
* Use transitions words and phrases to make connections.
* Proofread.