

Essay Writing Structure and Revision Guide

A print-friendly essay writing guide for thesis statements, outlines, topic sentences, evidence, analysis, transitions, introductions, conclusions, grammar checks, and final revision. Use it before drafting, revising, or meeting with a tutor.

SECTIONS	6	WORKED EXAMPLES	6	FORMAT	Print friendly
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How to use this guide

A formula you cannot place is not knowledge yet. Work the recall drill below before the questions.

- Start with the assignment prompt. Circle the task words, topic, text or source requirement, and due date.
- Plan before drafting. A clear thesis, outline, and evidence list prevent most essay problems.
- Revise in layers: structure first, evidence second, clarity third, grammar last.

1. Prompt reading and planning

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Task words	analyze, compare, argue, explain	Identify what the assignment is asking you to do.
Audience	teacher, class, exam reader	Choose tone and detail level.
Purpose	inform, persuade, interpret	Keep the essay focused.
Plan	thesis + main points + evidence	Build a roadmap before drafting.
Time budget	plan, draft, revise, proofread	Avoid spending all time on the first paragraph.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Prompt: Explain how a character changes during the story. What should the plan include?

1. Task word = explain
2. Main focus = character change
3. Plan = starting trait, turning point, final trait, evidence for each

Check: The plan answers the prompt instead of summarizing the whole story.

2. Thesis and claim writing

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Thesis	main claim + reasons	Tells the reader exactly what the essay will prove.
Specific claim	avoid vague words	Use precise language instead of good, bad, or interesting.
Because test	claim because reason	Checks whether the thesis has an argument.
Scope	not too broad or tiny	Fits the assigned length.
Preview	reason 1 + reason 2 + reason 3	Shows the essay's structure.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Improve this thesis: School uniforms are good.

1. The claim is too vague.
2. Add reasons and scope.
3. Improved: School uniforms can improve focus and reduce social pressure by making the school day less stressful.

Check: The improved thesis previews two reasons.

3. Body paragraphs

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Topic sentence	claim for one paragraph	Connects the paragraph to the thesis.
Evidence	quote, fact, example, detail	Proves the point with support.
Analysis	explain why evidence matters	Shows your thinking, not just the source.
Concluding link	therefore, this shows	Connects the paragraph back to the thesis.
Paragraph unity	one main idea	Avoids drifting into a second topic.

WORKED EXAMPLE

A paragraph gives a quote but no explanation. What is missing?

1. Evidence is present.
2. Analysis is missing.
3. Add 2-3 sentences explaining how the quote supports the topic sentence.

Check: A reader should never have to guess why evidence matters.

4. Evidence and source use

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Quote	exact source words	Use when wording matters.
Paraphrase	source idea in your words	Use when the idea matters more than wording.
Context	who, where, when	Introduces evidence clearly.
Citation	teacher-required format	Credits the source.
Relevance	matches the claim	Keeps evidence from becoming random detail.

WORKED EXAMPLE

A student drops a quote into a paragraph without context. Fix the setup.

1. Name the source or speaker.
2. Briefly explain the moment.
3. Then include the quote and analysis.

Check: The reader knows where the evidence comes from.

5. Revision and clarity

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Structure pass	thesis, order, paragraph focus	Revise organization before grammar.
Evidence pass	specific, relevant, explained	Check whether each point is supported.
Sentence clarity	subject + verb + precise words	Make each sentence easy to follow.
Transitions	because, however, for example	Show relationships between ideas.
Proofread	spelling, punctuation, formatting	Polish the final draft.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Which should happen first: comma checks or paragraph order?

1. Check paragraph order first.
2. Then strengthen evidence and analysis.
3. Proofread grammar and commas last.

Check: Do not polish sentences that may need to be moved or rewritten.

6. Common essay types

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Argument essay	claim + reasons + evidence	Persuades with logical support.
Literary analysis	interpretation + textual evidence	Explains how a text creates meaning.
Expository essay	explain a topic clearly	Teaches or informs.
Compare contrast	similarities and differences	Organizes two subjects by points or blocks.
Personal narrative	experience + reflection	Shows growth or meaning from an event.

WORKED EXAMPLE

A compare contrast essay lists everything about topic A, then topic B, with no link. What can improve it?

1. Use point-by-point organization.
2. Compare the same feature for both topics.
3. Add transition phrases such as similarly, in contrast, and however.

Check: The reader can see the comparison, not just two separate summaries.

Notes and tutor hand-off

Bring this page to your next session so the tutor can start from what actually blocked you.

Assignment prompt or essay type:

The paragraph or skill I want to revise first:

Questions to bring to my tutor:
