

Essay Writing

A step-by-step guide to building
a well written essay.

1. Understanding the Purpose of an Essay

- Nothing more than a written argument
- The purpose is to persuade
- If you are not arguing a point then you are not writing an essay
- Must be crystal clear in presenting your ideas



2. Creating a Basic Thesis Statement

- Thesis = an opinion that you will attempt to prove.
- Usually answers an important question – one that is controversial



2. Thesis: To be or not to be!

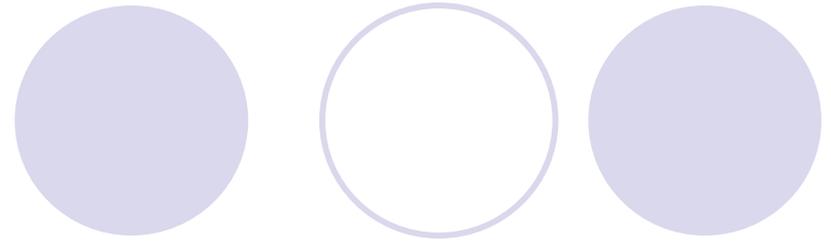
- It should be –
 - One sentence
 - Crystal clear for clarity's sake
 - Avoid being overly wordy (verbose)
 - A defensible opinion
 - Think about this:
 - How could you defend the statement that: "Blue is the best color"?
- It should not be –
 - An easily demonstrated fact
 - For example:
 - Teen suicide is a major issue that teenagers face.
 - This is a basic fact that, with a little research, can easily be proven.

3. Determining if the Thesis is solid

- If your thesis is correct, you should have some major reasons why.
- The reasons will then become the topics that you could discuss in detail to show that the thesis is correct



3. Sketch it Out!

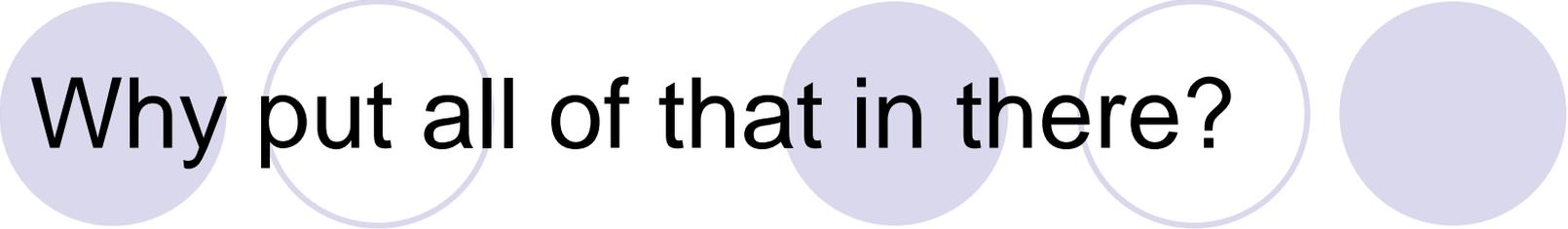


- Each major point is not a detail, but a category that will contain a lot of evidence supporting that point.
- You should have at least 2 major points; however, 3 is optimal.
- More categories = stronger argument



4. Improve Your Thesis

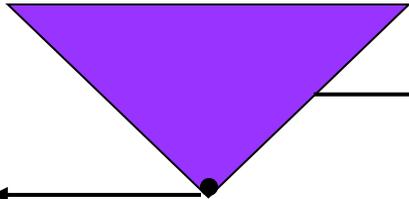
- Now that you know WHY your argument is correct, go back to your original thesis and add a brief mention of those reasons.
- Old thesis: Plainedge High School has the best football program in New York state.
- New Thesis: Due to their combination of great coaching, stellar offensive and unbeatable defense, Plainedge High School has the best football program in New York state.
- Your thesis should always be one sentence!!!

A decorative header consisting of five circles in a row. The first, third, and fifth circles are solid light purple. The second and fourth circles are white with a light purple outline. The text '4. Why put all of that in there?' is centered over these circles.

4. Why put all of that in there?

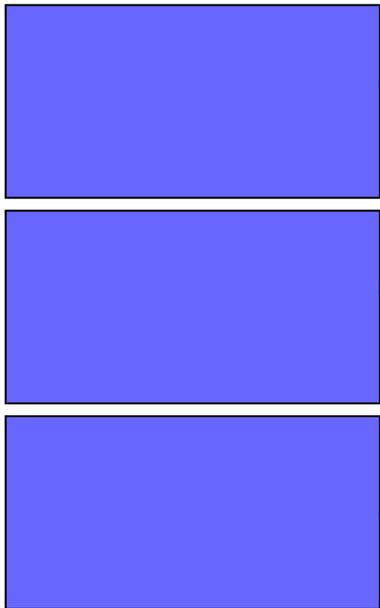
- To hint at what will come in the body paragraphs
- Prepare the reader for your argument.
- Readers want ORDER.
- Hinting at your points shows that you have a plan.

5. Organizing the essay in order to prove thesis

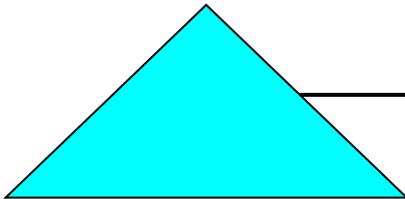


Introduction - Gives the reader some background information before jumping right into the argument.

Thesis should be at the end

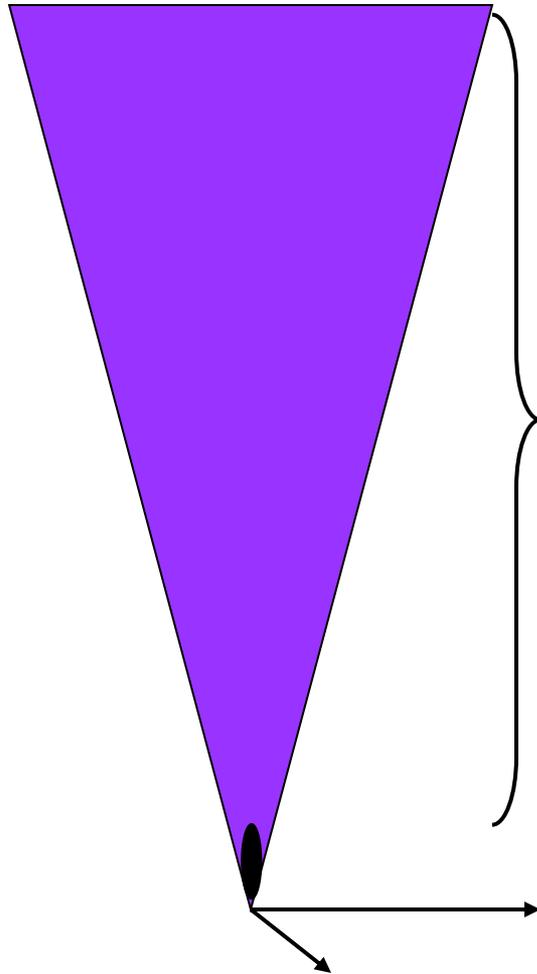


Body Paragraphs – Each paragraph contains a main idea that supports the thesis. Your points from step 3 can easily become your body paragraphs. If you are not proving your thesis in your bodies, then you are wasting the reader's time.



Conclusion – Slams home your point and hopefully gets the reader to realize the significance of your argument.

6. Introduction



- **Background** - Act as if your reader has never heard of your topic before. Using your intro, get them ready to hear your argument. Start with the basics: who? What? Where? When? Why?
- **Thesis** – End with your improved thesis as the entire intro should build up to your argument.

- If you have the opportunity to, try to add a quote or some other interesting hook into the background to catch the reader's attention.
- If you are being timed (i.e. Regents or SAT) skip the hook and add 3-4 sentences of background information.

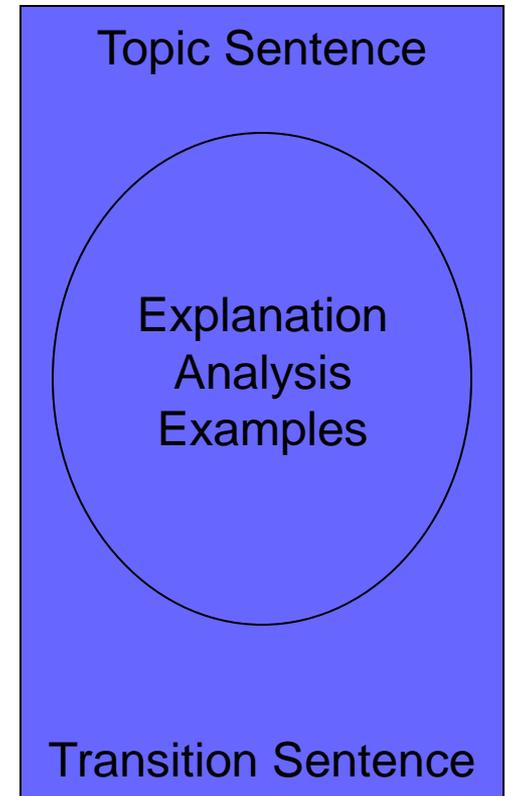
Due to their combination of great coaching, stellar offensive and unbeatable defense, Plainedge High School has the best football program in New York state.

7. Body Paragraphs

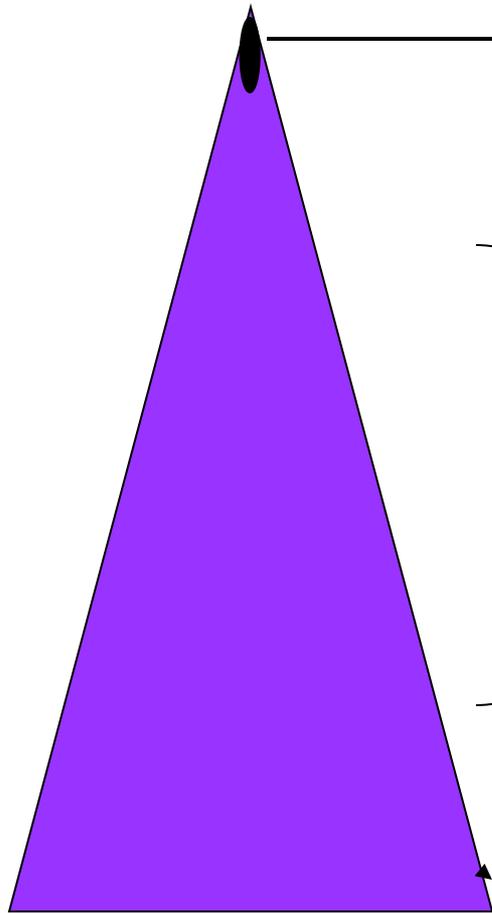


All bodies include:

1. Topic sentence – introduces the material in this paragraph
2. A complete explanation of what you mean by your topic sentence.
 1. You may include some analysis here (i.e. cause / effect, compare / contrast, interpreting, evaluating)
3. Then you provide some detailed examples to prove your explanation. This is where you develop your thesis.



8. Conclusion



Reworded Thesis – Without their exemplary coaches, amazing offense and unstoppable defense, Plainedge would not have the best high school football program in the state.

Repeating the same thesis from your introduction will make you sound repetitive.

Then remind the reader of each major point. This should only take 2-3 sentences.

Connection – tell the reader, who is now convinced by your argument, why he should care!!!!

Connect your argument with some larger idea or event –one that the reader finds interesting or relevant to his own life.