Basics of Good Writing

Two Locations: In the Lyman Beecher Brooks Library, First Floor and Madison 109

Tel: 757-823-2271
Email: writingcenter@nsu.edu

Website: nsu.edu/writing-center
INTRODUCTION

In this workshop, participants will review the qualities of good writing.
ESSAY TYPES

- Expository
- Argumentative
- Analytical
Hate crimes have increased three years in a row, according to the FBI.
ESSAY TYPES

Argumentative

Makes a claim, supports an opinion, or attempts to persuade an audience

Without the steady hand and specific decisions of Barack Obama, America would never have recovered from the hole it entered in the early 2000’s.
The call-out flyer for NSU’s cheerleading team uses a mixture of dynamic imagery and tantalizing promises to create interest in potential, new members.
What does my instructor want?

Know what your instructor wants, especially when formatting an essay.

Ask instructor about font, font size, paragraph indentation, etc.

Which documentation style should the essay utilize? MLA, APA, ASA, etc.

Can I use “I” in this essay?

When in doubt, ask your instructor in order to avoid losing points.
Standard Writing Process

1. Brainstorm the topic or for a topic
   Reading, listing, webbing, prewriting

2. Develop a thesis (a working thesis)

3. Create an outline

4. Begin drafting
   Introduction, 3 body paragraphs, conclusion

5. Revising and Editing
   Add, change, or delete

6. Another draft w/changes
   Read aloud to self or another
   Make needed changes

7. Proofreading

8. Publishing
   (Turning in to your professor)
Introduction: Gives context of the subject/topic you are writing about and then discusses the purpose of your writing (the point or issue you will ultimately be making). Your thesis statement should be located at the end of this paragraph and describe what your overall purpose or argument will be. Briefly discuss how you will introduce your subject topic.

What is your thesis statement?

Body paragraphs: Include or at least three to four body paragraphs. Each paragraph should only discuss one topic/issue/idea that connects to your thesis statement. Do not begin or end a paragraph with a quote. Briefly describe what you will discuss in body paragraph one and how it connects to your thesis statement.

Briefly describe what you will discuss in body paragraph two and how it connects to your thesis statement.

Briefly describe what you will discuss in body paragraph three and how it connects to your thesis statement.

Briefly describe what you will discuss in body paragraph four and how it connects to your thesis statement.

Conclusion: Your conclusion needs to state why what you said is significant. What should the reader take away from your discussion? Briefly describe what your conclusion will state.

Needs to state why what you said is significant and what the audience can take away from your essay.
Typical Outline

I. Introduction
Thesis: High Performance Teams

II. Talent, skills, and work ethic
1. supporting detail
2. supporting detail

III. Power and empowerment
1. supporting detail
2. supporting detail

IV. Communication
1. supporting detail
2. supporting detail

V. Conclusion
1. restate thesis
2. summary
3. your reflection about topic

Gives context of the subject/topic and discusses the purpose of your writing.

For each body paragraph, briefly describe what you will discuss and how it connects to your thesis.

Needs to state why what you said is significant and what the audience can take away from your essay.
The Basis of a Good Essay

- A strong thesis
- Adherence to all grammar and punctuation rules
- Revision
Criteria for a Strong Thesis

- Provable; debatable; arguable
- Limited to 1-2 sentences; best to use a complex sentence structure
- Unambiguous word choice
- Narrow in scope
- Supportable with facts and evidence
- Demonstrates what’s at stake—(“so what?”)
Weak Thesis:

Technology benefits education in positive ways.

Stronger Thesis:

Despite what critics say about the negative impact of computer usage in young children, computers allow fourth graders an early advantage in technological and scientific education.

Note that the stronger thesis explains how technology benefits education and why it matters.
What to look for as you reread your essay?

1. Look for: Consider your word choice and change any words that don’t say what you mean.

2. Look for: Capitalize all of the first person “I.”

3. Look for: Check for mistakes with homonyms: its/it’s, their/there/, they’re, to/too/two

..and these...

4. Look for: your/you’re, are/our, Than/then, were/where, know/no

5. Look for: Grammar check cannot distinguish which of these homonyms are the correct versions.
Some of the most common errors

- Plural or possessive
- Sentence fragments
- Run-ons – fused sentences and comma splices
- Commas in a series
Is it plural or possessive?

She has three dollars, but it is her brother’s money.
Is it plural or possessive?

There are three families at the county fair.
Is it plural or possessive?

Jack’s car is in the driveway.

BUT

Moses’ mother was Jewish.
Sentence Fragments

All sentences (Independent Clauses) should contain a subject and verb.

NO: While he was driving around the school, he saw his sister.

YES: While he was driving around the school, he saw his sister.
Sentence Structure

**Independent clause**
A complete sentence.
Independent clauses serve as the main clause because it is complete.

- The presenter brought her umbrella.
- It was raining.
Sentence Structure

**Dependent clause**
A fragment, phrase, or group of words which are NOT a complete sentence.
They depend on a main or independent clause to be complete.

- *because it was raining*
- *which could have been mistaken for a rose*
- *taking the dog for a walk late at night*
Combining Sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>Clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>• Period</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause</td>
<td>• Semi-colon</td>
<td>clause</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Comma with a coordinating</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conjunction</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Conjunction (coordinating or</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
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<tr>
<td>clause</td>
<td>subordinating)</td>
<td>clause</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Comma</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause</td>
<td></td>
<td>clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate conjunctions:</td>
<td>for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinating conjunctions:</td>
<td>after, although, as, before, because, even though, if, since, until, while, when (and more)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial conjunctions</td>
<td>need a little extra: i.e. however, therefore, thus, nevertheless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ex. She announced that the campus will reopen; however, she added some conditions for students’ return.
Sha’Ne lost weight recovering from surgery, her doctor wants her to get back to a healthy weight.
Run-on Sentence

Error: Terrence writes daily he is trying to finish a research paper.

*Terrence writes daily* *because* he is trying to finish a research paper.

OR

*Terrence writes daily. He is trying to finish a research paper.*
Commas in a Series

However, another common use is the commas in a series. When there are at least three items in a sentence, you must place commas between each item in the list. A series of 3 phrases also need commas.

John has his backpack, his calculator, and his laptop.
Basic Writing Tips

• Avoid the use of the “I” pronoun and its relatives (we, us, our, my, etc.)
  “I think the Cosmopolitan magazine exploits women even though it claims to build women’s self-esteem in its articles.”

• Vary sentence structure. Refrain from starting every sentence with “the”, “a”, “there are/is/was/were”, “it is/was”.

• Avoid contractions (“it is” instead of “it’s”) and always use diction (word choice) that is appropriate for academic writing over casual, conversational language.
Basic Writing Tips

• Use transitions liberally. When providing evidence and support to prove your points, “for example”, “an example”, “another instance,” etc., are great for introducing your evidence. A tip sheet is available on our website.

• Never end a paragraph with a quotation or cited information from a source. You must explain how the source information expands your claims/points.
Before you submit your essay....

Run spelling and grammar check.
Proofread your essay.
Have someone review your essay, either a peer or someone in the Writing Center!
Writing is NOT a linear process; it’s messy.

Use formal language and conventions appropriate for college-level writing

Always proofread and review your work before submitting.
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Student Workshop Evaluation

Faculty Workshop Evaluation

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