

# TEACHING ESSAY STRATEGIES

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**INDIVIDUALIZED  
ESSAY  
INSTRUCTION**



**COMPREHENSIVE  
ESSAY  
STRATEGIES  
PROGRAM**



## Essay e-Comments

### Sentence Structure

**Complete Sentence** A complete sentence 1. tells a complete thought 2. has a subject and predicate 3. has the voice drop down at the end of a statement but go up at the end of a question. **Examples:** *They finished* their work. (Voice drops down.) *Are they finished?* (Voice goes up.)

**Sentence Fragment** A sentence fragment is only part of a complete sentence. To fix a sentence fragment, connect the fragment to the sentence before or after.

**Example:** Because of the ice. The roads were hazardous. Revision: The roads were a hazardous because of the ice.

**Sentence Fragment** A sentence fragment is only part of a complete sentence. To fix a sentence fragment, change the fragment into a complete thought. **Example:** Mainly the lack of time. Revision: Mainly, they needed more time.

**Sentence Fragment** A sentence fragment is only part of a complete sentence. To fix a sentence fragment, remove any subordinating conjunctions. **Example:** Although she found out where the boys were. Revision: She found out where the boys were.

**Sentence Run-on** A sentence run-on has two independent clauses connected without correct punctuation. To fix a sentence run-on, separate the run-on into two sentences.

**Example:** Lou told his mom he told his sister. Revision: Lou told his mom. He told his sister.

**Sentence Run-on** A sentence run-on has two independent clauses connected without correct punctuation. To fix a sentence run-on, add a semicolon between the clauses.

**Example:** Lou told his mom he told his sister. Revision: Lou told his mom; he told his sister.

**Sentence Run-on** A sentence run-on has two independent clauses connected without correct punctuation. To fix a sentence run-on, add a comma-conjunction between the clauses. **Example:** Lou told his mom he told his sister. Revision: Lou told his mom, and he told his sister.

**Sentence Subject Placement** The simple, complete, or compound subject is usually placed at the start of a declarative sentence. The sentence subject is never part of a prepositional phrase. **Example:** *The talkative friends* went into the room to gossip.

**Sentence Subject Placement** In interrogative sentences, the sentence subject comes after the predicate or comes between the parts of the verb. **Examples:** *Is she the one?* *Will Tom know* what to do?

## Word Choice

**Wrong Word** The wrong word is used here. The word may be denotatively (as it is exactly defined) incorrect, connotatively (as the word is commonly understood) incorrect, or a secondary meaning. Substitute a more precise word or revise the sentence and explain what you mean to say.

**Reversal** Two words have been reversed. **Example:** He was a strong boy in his convictions. Revision: He was a boy, strong in his convictions.

**Define this term.** This term or word is not commonly understood or is used in a special way and so should be defined to be courteous to the reader. Italicize or underline the term or word. The definition can be parenthetical or stand on its own.

**Example:** The *zeitgeist* (spirit of the times)...

**Delete this word(s).** This word, phrase, clause, or sentence is unnecessary to the meaning of the paragraph. Brevity (keeping things short and to the point) improves writing style.

**Overused Word(s)** This word or phrase has been used excessively. Use a pronoun, synonym, or restatement instead of this word. Or simply revise the sentence to omit.

**Omit Needless Words** Delete expressions that do not add meaning to a sentence, especially those that include the word *that*. **Examples:** owing to the fact that, despite (in spite of) the fact that, call your attention to the fact that, the fact that.

**Omit Needless Words** Delete expressions that do not add meaning to a sentence, especially those that include the phrases: *who is* and *which is*. **Examples:** My wife, who is a gourmet cook, used cumin, which is my favorite spice. Revision: My wife, a gourmet cook, used cumin, my favorite spice.

## Writing Style

**Redundant** Avoid repeating ideas, words or phrases, and cited sources. Redundancy suggests padding or over-reliance on single ideas of sources of information.

**Needs Parallel Structure** Repeat key words or grammatical structures to create a memorable writing rhythm. These parallel structures can improve reader comprehension. **Example:** We cannot dedicate... We cannot consecrate... We cannot hallow this ground (Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address").

**Delete Slang** Essays are formal writing, so slang is not permitted. **Example:** The kids studied hard for their exams. Revision: The children studied hard for their exams.

**Using *not* as Denial** Avoid using the word *not* to deny a positive assertion. **Example:** She was not frequently on time to class. Revision: She was frequently late to class.

**Revise: Too Many “to-be verbs”** Consider limiting use of *is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been* to one per paragraph. To replace “to be verbs”: 1. Substitute a more active verb 2. Begin the sentence with another word from the sentence 3. Change one of the words in the sentence into a verb form.

**Revise: Too Many Prepositional Phrase Strings** Avoid using more than two prepositional phrases back-to-back. **Example:** The rabbit ran under the fence, through the garden, to the cabbage patch. Revision: The rabbit ran under the fence and into the garden. It stopped at the cabbage patch.

**Revise Double Negative** Avoid using double negatives to indicate a positive in formal essay writing as this construction tends to confuse the reader. **Example:** Do not ever fail to use soap to wash dishes. Revision: Always use soap to wash dishes.

**Revise Passive Voice** Avoid using passive voice, in which the subject of the sentence receives the action of the predicate. Instead, revise to active voice, in which the subject of the sentence does the action. **Example:** The pen was given to the teacher by Jim. Revision: Jim gave the pen to the teacher.

**Excessively Wordy** Concise writing is better understood than wordy writing. Eliminate unnecessary words at the beginning of sentences. **Examples:** It is... There is... There are... This... I think... I believe... In my opinion.

**Excessively Wordy** Concise writing is better understood than wordy writing. Eliminate “who,” “which,” and “that” if possible. **Example:** oatmeal which was mushy Revision: mushy oatmeal **Example:** The children, who talked loudly, didn’t listen. Revision: Talking loudly, the children didn’t listen. **Example:** She was acting like a child. Revision: She acted childishly.

**Excessively Wordy** Concise writing is better understood than wordy writing. Replace wordy and weak verb forms with strong verbs. **Example:** She was acting like a child. Revision: She acted childishly.

**Excessively Wordy** Concise writing is better understood than wordy writing. Replace “\_tion” and “\_sion” noun constructions with strong verbs. **Example:** He turned in the application for the job. Revision: He applied for the job.

**Excessively Wordy** Concise writing is better understood than wordy writing. Replace prepositional phrases with modifiers when possible. **Example:** The principal of the school supervised the painting of the gym. Revision: The school principal supervised painting the gym.

**Excessively Wordy** Concise writing is better understood than wordy writing. Combine two sentences into one to form a complex, compound, or compound-complex sentence. **Example:** She was not happy. This was a result of her being lonely. Revision: Because she was lonely, she was not happy.