

ESSAY SKILLS WORKSHEETS

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Thesis Statements
Transitions
Errors in
Reasoning
Writing Genre

Essay Paragraph
Structure
Writing Clarity
Sentence
Structure



Thesis Statement Worksheet #1

A good thesis statement will state the writing topic and key words of the writing prompt. For an informational/explanatory essay, the thesis statement states the specific purpose of the essay and may include a preview of the main ideas found in the upcoming topic sentences. The thesis statement serves as the controlling idea throughout the essay; no additional topics may be included in the body paragraphs which do not respond to the thesis statement. Usually place the thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph.

Directions: Read the definition of the Writing Direction Word and the Writing Prompt. Dissect the Writing Prompt with the **WHO, WHAT, HOW, DO** strategy. **WHO:** Underline any words which identify the audience or the role of the writer. **WHAT:** Circle any words which identify the topic, context, or purpose of the writing task. **HOW:** Bracket any words which identify the writing format or the resources. **DO:** Box any words which identify key writing direction words. Write a **Question To Be Answered**, read the **Poor Thesis Statement** after reading the **Teacher Explanation**, and then **Revise or Replace** with your own thesis statement.

Writing Direction Word: *Examine* means to inspect the details closely and test according to a standard.

Writing Prompt: Everyone who watches television is affected by the content of television commercials. The author of this article details both the positive and negative effects of these commercials on children. Examine how television commercials influence children in a two-minute oral presentation to your classmates and teacher.

Question to Be Answered

Poor Thesis Statement: Children watch a lot of television commercials.

Teacher Explanation: This thesis statement does not state the specific purpose of the essay. In an essay that requires the writer to inform the reader, the thesis statement should state a specific reason or objective for writing. The thesis statement serves as the controlling idea throughout the essay.

Revise or Replace with Your Own Thesis Statement

Transition Worksheet #3: Explanation or Emphasis

Transitions are words or phrases which connect sentences and paragraphs in an essay. Each of these explanation or emphasis transition words or phrases helps the reader understand or recognize the importance of a key word, term, or idea:

in fact, regarding this/that, concerning this/that, as for, that is, for this purpose, with this intention, to the end that, in order that, in order to, so as to, lest, so, indeed, even, of course

[Bracket] the explanation or emphasis transitions in the following sentences.

1. Of course, the driver was going excessively fast. To the end that his car went out of control.
2. Indeed, she stopped talking, lest she say something she would later regret.
3. For this purpose, they arrived late, so as to ensure they would be noticed, even by the dog.
4. He began to sing; that is, he made a noise. Regarding his voice, no one would call that singing.
5. In fact, John was called in to help. For this purpose, others had tried, but failed.

Fill in the blanks with the explanation or emphasis transitions which fit best. Change the capitalization, tense, or number as needed, but use each transition only once.

1. _____ situation, 2. _____ the worst critics tried to be agreeable,
3. _____ so many people tire of their arguments. 4. _____ compromise, it takes both sides willing to sacrifice some of their interests for the greater good,
5. _____ that fewer will suffer needlessly. 6. _____, the law was passed.

Application: Write a three-sentence paragraph, using two explanation or emphasis transitions.

Errors in Reasoning Worksheet #3: Red Herrings

Definition: A red herring error means that an unconnected reference is used to distract the reader from the argument. A red herring refers to a smelly fish that was sometimes used to throw hunting dogs off the track of the fox in English foxhunts.

Example: Everyone deserves the right to be heard. Racist hate groups have their rights to free speech even if they advocate violence. Facebook shouldn't censor their racist posts.

Explanation: The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that free speech is not an unlimited right. If it endangers others, it may be restricted.

Practice

When asked about the major challenges facing our planet, the candidate has a ready answer. The politician suggests that poverty remains the most important problem in the world today. However, the world has always had its share of poor people.

Explain the Red Herring Error: _____

Application

Write a topic sentence on a subject of your choice with supporting evidence and analysis which includes a red herring error in reasoning. Explain the red herring error.

Topic Sentence: _____

Evidence: _____

Analysis with Red Herring Error: _____

Explain the Red Herring Error: _____

Writing Style Worksheet #3

Tim said, “Let me read you my essay introduction: ‘In this essay my evidence, as detailed in the following four body paragraphs, will prove all I want to say to you by the time it ends.’” “I thought the essay was supposed to be about fish.” replied Joni. “I’ll get to that later. I thought I needed some bait to hook my readers first.” “No, get to the essay topic of *fish*; don’t talk about *you* and *your essay structure*.” “Okay, I catch what you’re saying.”

Definition and Examples

You are the writer *of* the essay, not the writer *in* the essay. Unlike a narrative (story), you can’t place yourself in the writing. **Example:** I understand, but for me as the writer.

An essay uses objectivity (being fair to all points of view) to convince in an argumentative essay or to inform or explain in an informational/explanatory essay. Placing yourself in an essay inserts personal preferences and takes away from the objectivity of your evidence.

Read the rules.

- Don’t refer to yourself in an essay as the writer or use first person pronouns: I, me, we, us, my, mine, our, myself, ourselves. Additionally, don’t address your audience as *you*.
- In your essays, don’t refer to parts of the essay or the essay itself. Use transition words to connect sentences and paragraphs to assist the reader’s understanding of your writing.

[Bracket] the writer and essay references in the following sentences.

1. I’ll tell you everything you need to know by the end of this essay I wrote.
2. In the last paragraph, I proved that my evidence was convincing.
3. In the following paragraphs, I will show you why people should obey traffic signs.
4. Our goal by the end of this essay will be to give you reasons and evidence to persuade you.
5. In conclusion, we have proved that our position is correct throughout this editorial.

Revise the sentence to eliminate the writer or essay references.

I have shown that you should delete references to your own writing.

Types of Evidence Worksheet #1

Directions: Identify the number of the Types of Evidence in the space provided.

Types of Evidence: FE SCALE C

1. **Fact** means something actually said or done. Use quotes for direct or indirect quotations.
2. **Example** is a subset typical of a category or group.
3. **Statistic** is a numerical figure that represents evidence gained from scientific research.
4. **Comparison** means to show how the subject is like something else in a meaningful way.
5. **Quote from an Authority** is something said by an expert on the subject.
6. **Logic** means to use deductive (general to specific) or inductive (specific to general) reasoning to prove a point.
7. **Experience** used as evidence may be a commonly known event or an event of which there is limited knowledge.
8. **Counterclaim:** A counterclaim states an argument against your point of view. The counterargument disproves the counterclaim.

- ___ 1. Although she thought the vocals were hard to hear, the “feel” of the music was great.
- ___ 2. It makes sense that the closer he got to the speakers, the louder the volume became.
- ___ 3. She said, “It was the best concert I’ve ever seen.”
- ___ 4. The band sounded like The Clash in its prime.
- ___ 5. A song such as “Nature’s Son” is a ballad.
- ___ 6. More than half of the concert-goers were pleased.
- ___ 7. Music critic Angela Brown called it “the best single concert of the year.”
- ___ 8. Seeing the band live made him want to purchase their CD.
- ___ 9. Standing in line to get the tickets was horrible.
- ___ 10. The concert promoter said he tried to keep the ticket prices down to reasonable levels.
- ___ 11. The cost of food was outrageous, but people were allowed to bring in their own.
- ___ 12. Ticket prices increased by 10% this year.
- ___ 13. The band performed two encores.
- ___ 14. People dressed casually in jeans, flip-flops, and tee-shirts.
- ___ 15. Their set list had more dance songs than the last time they played here.
- ___ 16. Buying four tickets for the cost of three was a better deal than purchasing separately.

Sentence Structure Worksheet #3: Simple Predicate

Definition: The simple predicate is the verb that acts upon the subject of the sentence. It does the work of the “do-er” or the “be-er” of the sentence. The simple predicate shows a physical or mental action or it describes a state of being. When additional words help describe the simple predicate, this is known as a complete predicate. The complete predicate consists of the rest of the sentence other than the subject.

Examples: Michael *hurt* his hand. Simple Predicate
She *had become* a young lady.
They *should have listened* to me.
An angry man *tried to run me off* the road. Complete Predicate

Writing Hints

To find the simple predicate, first identify the subject and ask “What?” The answer to this question should be the predicate.

The simple predicate usually follows the subject in a sentence. However, it can be placed before the subject in a question (*Was it your mother’s purse?*), in an implied (suggested, not stated) sentence (*Look out!*), or in a phrase or clause at the beginning of a sentence to add special emphasis (*Even more interesting was the fact that she knew it would probably rain*).

Directions: Underline the subjects and circle the simple predicates found in the story below.

Ice-cream always has pleased young and old alike as a favorite summertime dessert. One ice-cream that pleases many is neapolitan. This ice-cream has chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla all in one. Rocky Road delights children of all ages with small bits of marshmallows and nuts in a rich chocolate ice-cream. For some, the nuts or marshmallows may cause an allergic reaction. Is anything better than a creamy double-scoop on a sugar or waffle cone? Watch out! Eating too much ice-cream can be an addictive behavior.

Directions: What is the complete predicate in the first sentence of the above story?

Directions: Write your own sentence with a simple predicate. Underline the subject and circle the simple predicate.

Sentence Structure Worksheet #7: Complex Sentence

Definition: A complex sentence has an independent clause and at least one dependent clause. An independent clause means that there is a subject and a predicate that expresses a complete thought. A dependent (subordinate) clause means that there is a subject and a verb that does not express a complete thought.

Example: Ty completed all his chores (independent clause) + after eating his lunch (dependent clause) = Ty completed all his chores after eating his lunch.

Writing Hints

Using different sentence structures makes your writing more interesting to read. Complex sentences can help define the relationship between complicated ideas. If starting a sentence with a dependent clause, follow the clause with a comma.

Adjective Clauses describe nouns or pronouns. Transitions beginning adjective clauses include *who*, *whose*, *on (for, of) whom* to refer to people, *that* to refer to people or things, and *which* to refer only to things.

Example: whose work is well-known

Adverb Clauses describe an adjective, an adverb, or verb. Transitions beginning adverb clauses include *after*, *although*, *as*, *as if*, *as long as*, *as much as*, *as soon as*, *as though*, *because*, *before*, *even if*, *how*, *if*, *in order that*, *once*, *since*, *so that*, *than*, *though*, *unless*, *until*, *when*, *whenever*, *where*, *wherever*, *whether*, and *while*.

Example: as long as she can wait

Noun Clauses are used as a subject, a complement (the rest of the sentence besides the subject and predicate), or as the object of a preposition. Transitions beginning noun clauses include *that*, *what*, *whatever*, *which*, *whichever*, *who*, *whoever*, *whom*, and *whomever*.

Example: whatever he demands

Directions: Re-write the following simple sentences into complex sentences in the spaces below. Use the transitions found in the above lists of dependent clauses.

Kenny will be able to go outside to play he practices his trombone

the team advances to the second round the *Kings* won the first round of the play-offs

Directions: Write your own complex sentence.

Thesis Statement Worksheet #1

A good thesis statement will state the writing topic and key words of the writing prompt. For an argumentative essay, the thesis statement states the claim(s) of the essay and may include a preview of the main ideas found in the upcoming topic sentences. Usually place the thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph.

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WHO: Underline any words which identify the audience or the role of the writer. **WHAT:** Circle any words which identify the topic, context, or purpose of the writing task. **HOW:** Bracket any words which identify the writing format or the resources. **DO:** Box any words which identify key writing direction words. Write a **Question To Be Answered**, read the **Poor Thesis Statement** after reading the **Teacher Explanation**, and then **Revise or Replace** with your own thesis statement.

Writing Direction Word: Argue means to prove an opinion or theory to be correct or true.

Writing Prompt: Everyone who watches television is affected by the content of television commercials. The author of this article details both the positive and negative effects of these commercials on children. Examine how television commercials influence children in a two minute oral presentation to your classmates and teacher.

WHO

WHAT

HOW

DO

Question to Be Answered

Poor Thesis Statement: Children watch a lot of television commercials.

Teacher Explanation: This thesis statement does not state the specific purpose of the essay. In an essay that requires the writer to inform the reader, the thesis statement should state a specific reason or objective for writing. The thesis statement serves as the controlling idea throughout the essay.

Revise or Replace with Your Own Thesis Statement

Transition Worksheet #11: Time

Transitions are words or phrases which connect sentences and paragraphs in an essay. Each of these time transition words or phrases signals the relationship between events or actions in time:

meanwhile, since, now, currently, during, recently, simultaneously, at that time, previously, then, eventually

List the time transitions in the following sentences.

1. Meanwhile, I began another hobby, and then eventually I began my current job.
2. She was previously engaged to a wealthy stockbroker.
3. They simultaneously played ping pong and listened to the basketball game.
4. Currently, I have no real idea as to when we will leave, since my wife and I are not talking.
5. Now would be a good time during this commercial break to discuss our dinner options.

Fill in the blanks with the time transitions which fit best. Change the capitalization, tense, or number as needed, but use each transition only once.

1. _____, I think it was last week, I bumped into Ian down at the ice rink.
2. _____, he is working in the rental shop.
3. _____, he had worked as one of the cooks at the food stand, but he was reassigned because he burned everything he tried to cook.
4. _____, he enjoys his new job and he is quite good at it. I watched him
5. _____ fit five skaters with their rental skates.
6. _____, he looked up to see me watching and asked how long I had been there.

Application: Write a three-sentence paragraph, using two time transitions.

Sentence Structure Worksheet #12: Run-on Sentence

Definition: A sentence run-on has two independent clauses connected together as if they were one sentence. An independent clause means that there is a subject and a predicate that expresses a complete thought.

Writing Hints

To change sentence run-ons into complete sentences, try the following:

1. Separate the run-on into two or more sentences.

Example: Luis told his brother he told his sister, too.
Luis told his brother. He told his sister, too.

2. Add a semi-colon between the clauses.

Example: Mary let him have it, she knew what she was doing.

Mary let him have it; she knew what she was doing.

3. Add a comma and conjunction after the first clause.

Example: I like her, she doesn't like me.
I like her, but she doesn't like me.

Add a subordinating conjunction to one of the clauses.

Example: Max was injured, he was still the best.
Even though Max was injured, he was still the best.

4. Change the second clause to a phrase starting with an *ing* word.

Example: They went to school, they looked for him.
They went to school, looking for him.

Directions: Change the following sentence run-ons into complete sentences in the spaces provided below.

Ms. Clements always prepared well for her lesson plans she worked hard.

Jonathan seemed very selfish he never shared with the other children.

Nicco did his chores before playing video games his brothers never did.