

Tutor Phil's

STOP ESSAY PAIN

A Magic Step-by-Step Formula

Shows You How to Start with Nothing and Create a 300 to 3,000

Word Essays Quickly and Easily

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How to write super term papers and enjoy doing it!

Preface

Dear Friend,

Thank you for investing in this book, and congratulations on taking charge of your own writing success!

Before we begin I'd like to talk a little bit about why it is so great to be able to write your own term papers and write them well, too.

Wouldn't it be great if you could write your two, three, five, or even fifteen page papers without being overwhelmed with such challenges as choosing a topic, coming up with enough material to meet the word count requirement, or meeting the deadline?

This book will teach you how to write outstanding term papers full of great material quickly and easily.

What will your new Magic Writing skills give you?

- You'll be able to write good quality essays that professors enjoy reading.
- You'll be able to write quickly and effectively.
- You will no longer be overwhelmed with deadlines.
- You'll never be accused of plagiarism.
- You will have unshakable confidence in your writing abilities.
- You'll be able to defend the quality of your writing in front of ANY professor.
- Your grades will go up.
- Your overall GPA will go up.
- Your college experience will change forever.

My Story

As I write this today, I know that I have every right to be teaching you how to write essays. And this is because I can write them quickly and easily myself and get excellent grades, as well.

Just recently, it took me a couple of hours to write a research paper for one of the graduate courses that I took towards my Master's degree in English and Comparative Literature.

That paper:

- ✓ Was almost 10 pages long
- ✓ Was written quickly and without getting overwhelmed with research
- ✓ Got me full credit
- ✓ Got me a nice comment by my professor, saying that my paper was "very well organized and thought through"

Just as an aside, at the same time, my paper did not include an introduction or a conclusion. You'll see why that is important later.

At the same time, I must confess that I wasn't born a good writer of term papers. In fact, I didn't use to be a very good college student to start out with, period.

I'd like to share a bit of my own journey with you, because I want you to see that learning how to write essays quickly and easily can and will happen for you, even if you've never been good at writing.

My reading skills were as poor as my writing skills when I first started college back in 1997.

I began my studies in the spring of 1997 and did okay my first semester, probably because my advisor had had me registered for a couple of easy classes.

The following semester, I was taking Freshman Composition along with several other courses among which were Core History and Core Sociology.

To make a long story short, I failed the two core classes, but did pretty well in Freshman Composition – the English 1 (and that class was later to change my life).

I failed the two courses for one major reason: I couldn't write well. In other words, I was horrible at CREATING STRUCTURES – the core concept that you will learn in this book.

I took a semester off, and then went back to my college studies. I majored in Computer and Information Science (luckily for me and for you, I then switched my major to English).

I registered again for the two Core classes in which I had got the F's the previous semester in order to replace them with something better. And this time something magical happened.

I was able to replace the F's with A's, and for me that was pretty incredible. But, even more incredibly, the grades I got this time around came about pretty naturally and almost effortlessly.

This time around I was reading the same difficult texts and had to write term papers on the same topics. But my ability to write, to my great surprise, had improved, maybe, 1000%.

How did that happen? Well, as it turned out, the training I had got in my Freshman Composition class prepared me for the heavy-duty college writing.

It is also very interesting that my writing skills improved my reading skills as well, but this is just another side note, although you'll hear more about this in my newsletter.

Whereas before I couldn't understand the difficult texts, I was now able to comprehend so well that my hand was constantly up because I couldn't wait to speak during class. My confidence skyrocketed. I was now really enjoying school.

I began to receive straight A's for my term papers. I couldn't believe the change! My college studies were never the same.

Now I actually looked forward to writing papers because it was a way for me to explore my brain and to express myself in clear language. And I will teach you the same in this book.

So, I hope you're hooked, and let's dive in.

What this book IS:

This book is a short crash-course on college writing.

It is designed to teach you how to write well-written term papers quickly and easily, and enjoy the process.

It is meant to teach you how to write what's called 'a position essay,' or a thesis paper, or an argumentative essay. The general term for this kind of writing is *expository prose*.

This book is intended for ANYONE who wants to learn essay writing. Whether you are a creative type or a computer guru, it doesn't matter. If you need help writing term papers on ANY topic, this book is for you.

What this book is NOT:

This is not a book on Creative Writing. In other words, it WILL NOT teach you how to write:

Short stories

Biography

Novels

Poetry

ANY kind of DRAMA

That kind of writing, usually called Creative Writing, is a completely different animal and has nothing to do with writing college 'position' papers.

What you will learn:

- How to choose a topic so that you can write on it quickly and have fun doing it
- How to meet the word count requirement without pulling your hair out
- How to add hundreds of words quickly and easily and improve the quality of your writing at the same time
- How to quickly boost your grades
- How to impress your professors
- How to defend your writing in case you think your grade is unfair
- How to meet deadlines
- Much, much more...

My Promise to You:

This book has a lot of powerful ideas without all the fluff. If you put in the time and complete it, doing all the exercises, I promise you that your grade will go up by at least a letter on your next paper. At least!

Also, you will get rid of all or most of the pain associated with meeting the deadlines and word or page count requirements.

The main purpose of this book is to simply show you how to turn a 10-word sentence into a 2,000 or even 5,000 word essay quickly and painlessly.

Sounds good?

Then let's begin.

How to Use this Book

Let's keep this simple, shall we? Here's how to get the most from your book:

Read through the entire book from the first page to the last, doing all the exercises without skipping any.

It is vitally important not to skip any exercises, even if they seem too easy or too difficult. And, yes, we'll be going from easier to more challenging in each section.

By the time you've read through the book and completed all the exercises, you will be better at writing essays and term papers than most people you know.

At that point, feel free to come back to any section of the book that you need for a particular assignment. Now you can use it as a reference manual. The more often you consult it, the more automatic your essay-writing will become.

Also, remember that there are always more great essay tips on my website at:

www.TutorPhil.com

Part I

Before You Sit Down to Write

What is an Expository Essay?

An expository essay is a piece of writing in which the writer states a point of view (his conclusion about something) and then provides evidence to support it. That's all.

The expository essay is also known as a 'position essay,' a 'thesis,' or an 'argumentative essay.'

It is called so because in it the author offers his 'position,' or an 'argument' which he is going to defend (support using evidence).

An example of an expository essay would be an Amazon.com review of a book or any other product. Usually the reviewer will offer his opinion on a piece of merchandise, enumerating its 'pros' and 'cons.'

Some reviews, whether found on Amazon.com or other websites, are very well written.

A Note on Introductions and Conclusions

During your college years and beyond you will encounter many different views on how an expository essay should be written. This is simply something which both you and I must accept as a fact of life.

Therefore, in order to ‘swim among the academic sharks,’ so to speak, and survive, you must master the art of ‘pure essay writing.’

Now, what do I mean by ‘pure?’

I mean as direct and concise as possible and without trying to make it pretty.

Please understand that Introductions and Conclusions are merely ornamental and do not add to the intellectual quality of your essay.

I’ll discuss this in more detail later, but for now let’s just focus on the ‘meat’ of any essay – the Thesis and the Proof (Support).

If you can master the simple model that I’m about to teach you (which consists of strictly the thesis and its proof), I promise you that writing an introduction and a conclusion (which, by the way, will add some volume to your essay, if you choose to write them) will be nothing but a piece of cake for you.

So, just trust me and let’s go forward.

The Building Blocks of an Essay

Intellectually and practically, any essay contains only two parts: the Thesis and the Proof.

A thesis is simply an argument that you will be defending throughout the entire essay.

Here's an example: "*Abraham Lincoln's presidency was unlikely because of his past failures.*"

Who or what is the subject of the essay? *Abraham Lincoln's presidency.*

What about it? *It was unlikely because of his past failures.*

And now the entire paper must contain only the material that is supportive of this claim. It must contain nothing else. Makes sense?

The proof should immediately follow the thesis and begin to support it right away. For example, what would be the best way to support the above thesis? To immediately begin discussing Lincoln's past failures, of course.

And once you're done discussing the failures, your paper is finished. How do you like that?

When Taking a Stand

Whenever you sit down to write an expository essay, ideally it is because you have something important to share (although in our case, you're probably writing it mainly because if you don't write and submit a good essay, you'll get some pain in the form of a poor grade or even failing a class).

But even when you're pressed by your professor's requirements, this shouldn't mean that you can't have fun expressing your real thoughts and feelings on a particular subject. The way to have more fun writing a paper is to write about something you would be interested in sharing with others, or at least with your professor.

And your main point (that is, your thesis) can be one of three types:

- a. Unilateral (one-sided)
- b. Bilateral (two-sided)
- c. Unilateral with a small objection

Unilateral

A unilateral (literally meaning 'one-sided') point is one in which you offer a perspective that is limited to one feeling about it:

"My trip to India was a wonderful adventure."

In this case, you obviously have nothing bad to say about your trip to India. It is going to be a glowing review. Many reviews on Amazon.com, for example, are of this kind: people who are in love with a product will often discuss only the positives.

Keep in mind that there is absolutely nothing wrong with a unilateral argument. Hey, if you have only positive things to say about something, more power to you. No one can push you to disclose contradictory information.

The only caveat is – stick with the program. Don't feel guilty at some point and try to insert a piece of evidence that would contradict your main point, unless this is intentional (see the next two sections).

Bilateral (Balanced Perspective)

A bilateral argument is one in which a balanced perspective is offered:

“India is a great travel destination, unless traveling on business. Our trip to India left us with mixed emotions. Local hospitality, food, and exoticism made it exciting. But local bureaucracy made it almost impossible to complete our business transactions.”

Many professors and readers in general would prefer this kind of an argument, because it comes across as unbiased and, therefore, more trustworthy.

Unilateral with a Small Objection

Finally, sometimes you want to write a paper about something you feel very strongly about, whether positively or negatively, but think that you must share a detail or two that will serve to add a grain of the other side’s perspective. This kind of an argument would be Unilateral with an Objection. Please note that this argument is still mostly one-sided:

“Our trip to India was awesome: exotic fruit, the smell of incense, among other things, made it very interesting and fun. It would have been a perfect vacation if not for a small mishap when a monkey bit my sister.”

In this case, the trip was awesome overall except for a little accident. The argument is mostly one-sided. But it is very believable because the writer is obviously willing to admit that the argument has a little evidence to the opposite. Please note that the trip to India, in this case, was still a success.

Part II

Where to Start

Writing an Essay is a 3-Step Process:

Step 1

- Choose Your Topic

Step 2

- Write the Thesis Statement

Step 3

- Write the Body of the Essay

That's pretty much it. These steps are the core of the process. Of course, you should proofread and correct any mistakes you may catch, etc.

But the most important thing to do is to actually write the first draft, which consists of just the thesis statement (which is the opening paragraph) and the body. That's it.

Also, don't worry when I say 'first draft.' If you really take my method to heart, you will never have to write a draft after draft – your first drafts will be better than most of your peers' final drafts.

Everything else you may need to do with your essay, such as adding an introduction or a conclusion, or proofreading, will be a piece of cake to you when you have the thesis and the body. It will take you no longer than a few minutes to write a concluding or an introductory paragraph whenever you need to do so.

So, we'll focus on the meat of essay-writing, so to speak, and then, in a later section, we'll go through how to do all sorts of tweaks that you may (or may not) need to do before you submit your paper.

It All Starts From the Beginning

Step 1 – Choosing Your Topic

This is where you simply choose what you will be writing about. In my Freshman Composition class I usually gave my students a list of topics to choose from.

Here's an example of a topic:

“Men and women are fundamentally the same / fundamentally different.”

My students got to choose the stand they would wish to take – ‘the same’ or ‘different.’

When choosing a topic for your essay, always choose the one that would be the easiest for you to write on.

Remember that the topic you choose will determine how easy or difficult it will be for you to come up with the 1,000 or however many words you will need. So, the more you know on the subject, the better.

“But what if I feel that I know nothing about any of the topics my professor gave me?”

Don't panic. You can still write an A+ essay on any given topic. And here's why.

You see, we human beings don't give enough credit to our brains. And I've been guilty of that myself.

Our minds:

- Have a powerful ability to imagine
- Contain virtually unlimited amounts of information
- Can bring two ideas together to form a third one

And thanks to these wonderful powers, we can draw out the necessary information in order to support any idea at pretty much any time.

Let me show you how this works. Suppose you are taking a class with a real-life nutty professor who happens to be a devout smoker, and he assigns you the following topic:

“Smoking cigarettes benefits people.”

And he requires you to write 1,000 words on this topic. Now, you’re thinking to yourself:

“This is crazy. Everyone knows that smoking harms people. If I were to write about how smoking is bad for people, it would be much easier to write 1,000 words on it. But how do I write so much on the subject that I just can’t seem to figure out or don’t even agree with?”

And, of course, you’d be right. It really does seem tough. But let’s try and see if we can actually pull it off:

“Smoking benefits people in three ways. First, it helps the smoker relax during a stressful day. Secondly, it helps keep the body weight down. And finally, it helps people bond through the ritual of smoking together.”

As you can see, we’ve just come up with three ways smoking can benefit a human being. Now, I do NOT advocate smoking in any form – make sure you hear me!

My point here is simply to illustrate that even if it seems too difficult to come up with material for a particular topic, it is possible, even if the topic is crazy or something you could never agree with.

Let's Put Our Topic to a Quick Test

Could we come up with 1,000 words on this topic? Let's see:

Let's suppose we allow 100 words for the thesis statement. Then we have 900 more to go.

This is about 300 per subtopic. And I'll assume here that you already have my free report on [How to Add 300 Words to Any Essay in 15 Minutes](#). If not, go here and get it:

www.300EasyWords.com

So, do you think you could write just one example of each of the following?

1. How one or two people you know claim that smoking helps them relax during their stressful days at work
2. How one or two people lost weight as a result of taking up smoking or gained weight when they quit
3. How two or more people you know always smoke together and are best friends or became best friends as a result of cigarette breaks at work

Of course, you could, if you really wanted to. Even if you didn't know anyone like that personally, you could either go online or even consult your imagination for examples.

See how this works? At this point I hope you see that you can handle any topic your professor may throw at you.

Here's an Even Better News

Professors are sensible people (most of the time) 😊 and will probably never force you to write on a ridiculous topic.

In fact, you will probably be given a choice of a bunch of topics, and a choice of a pro or con within each topic (which means that you'll be able to choose whether you agree or disagree, completely or partially, with the statement).

This makes your life so much easier than with the smoking example above, do you agree? If you could do it with that topic, you can do it with any topic.

More Good News

When your professor doesn't assign you any topics and wants you to choose one by yourself and simply okay it with him, then this is a great option. In this case, just choose something that you know at least a little bit about (the more the better).

Try to come up with two or three to present to your professor, in case he disapproves one or two. This way you'll end up with a topic that will be the easiest for you to develop.

Step 2

Write Your Thesis Statement

This step is the most important in the process and we'll spend quite a bit of our time on this. If you learn how to write a thesis statement well, then:

- The rest of the essay will “write itself”
- You will have much easier time coming up with all the words and pages you need
- Your essay will be clear to you and your professor or instructor
- Writing the conclusion paragraph will be a piece of cake
- You'll begin to get excellent grades consistently

In addition, a good thesis statement helps you in the following ways:

1. It indicates to you the writer that you now know exactly what you're talking about, because you have planned all of the intellectual content of the paper. This gives you a boost of confidence when you begin writing the body of the essay.
2. Your thesis statement is your outline, and you can now use it to refer to and always know what to write next.
3. It gives your reader a clear idea of what she's about to read, thereby helping her follow and understand your essay.

What's a Thesis Statement?

A Thesis Statement is a sentence or paragraph that states the Main Point and outlines the Structure of Support.

For example:

The intake of sugar in large amounts is harmful because it raises the risk of diabetes, causes weight gain, and weakens the immune system.

What's the Main Point?

The intake of sugar in large amounts is harmful...

How is the Structure of the Support outlined?

... because it raises the risk of diabetes, causes weight gain, and weakens the immune system.

Why is this an outline?

Because now the reader knows exactly how the author is planning to prove the main point.

How many subtopics do we have?

Three:

1. Diabetes risk
2. Weight gain
3. Immune system

Now, after not only telling the reader what our main point is, but also telling him why we think so, and for how many reasons, we have prepared the reader's mind to receive our supporting evidence. The reader at this point is already half-convinced.

It's just a matter of preparing our reader's brain to accept our proof. This works a lot like allocating space for variables inside a computer in order to work with those variables later, if you are familiar with computer programming at all.

If you're not familiar with computer programming, then simply think of it as preparing the soil to plant a tree. If you simply stick your tree into the ground, there is a good chance of it not growing its roots into the soil.

But if you dig up a nice hole first, and then place the tree in and shovel some soil over it, then there is a very good chance that it will grow – in fact, it's almost guaranteed.

In short, write the main point and then state every main reason you believe it to be true, all in the first sentence or paragraph, depending on the desired length of your paper. Longer papers will need a paragraph. A very short paper can do with just one sentence.

See how a Thesis Statement works? Don't worry – we'll be going through this in detail. But first, I'd like to introduce you to the Power of the Number Three.

Three – the Magic Number

Three is a magic number when it comes to essay writing, but especially for essays that are between 1 and 10 pages or between 300 and 3000 words long.

The human brain is a wonderful machine. But since we human beings don't train it in the best possible ways, it becomes lazy. And, trust me, this applies to almost everyone, including the educators – professors and teachers.

Thus, number three becomes the easiest number for the brain to handle when keeping multiple things in mind.

The way the human brain treats numbers is the following:

“One – Two – Three – Many.”

I strongly recommend you use the Power of Three to write your essays. And now we'll jump into learning how to write a powerful thesis statement (which is [Step 1](#) of Writing an Essay), and you'll see how this works in practice.

Writing a Thesis Statement is a Two-Step Process

Step 1

Choose your Subject and Verb
(in other words, take a stand)

Step 2

Write the Outline of Supporting Evidence

Step 1

Choosing your Subject and Verb (Taking a Stand)

Let's assume that your professor has given you a choice of three essay questions. This is where writing your essay really begins:

- Are men and women essentially the same or different?
- Is it worth it to spend enormous money to fly to Mars?
- Is it better to work for a large or a small company?

Let's do **Step 1 of Writing an Essay** again in order to choose a topic (assuming we don't want to develop the topic "why smoking is good for people").

So, let's suppose that the easiest topic for you to write on would be the first one, because you believe you'd be able to come up with material about it most easily (because maybe you don't know as much about flying to Mars or working for a large company).

Then, guess what – you've just completed your **Step 1** – choosing a topic.

So, here it is:

"Are men and women essentially the same or different?"

That's it – we just chose our topic and thus completed **Step 1 of Writing an Essay!**

Now, on to **Step 2** of **Writing an Essay** – Writing the Thesis Statement. And, just to remind you: Writing a Thesis Statement is a two-step process:

Step 1

- Choose your Subject and Verb (in other words, take a stand)

Step 2

- Write the Outline of Supporting Evidence

Step 1 of Writing a Thesis Statement:

Taking a Stand

Taking a stand in this case will simply mean deciding which side of the coin you choose:

Men and women are essentially the same.

Or

Men and women are essentially different.

I want to teach you a concept that will help you decide which side to choose (or, whether to agree or to disagree). Here it is:

Remember how I mentioned in the earlier part of the book how the human brain works? That little lesson will help you choose your topic. And here's how:

You already know that your brain will be able to find material to support pretty much ANY claim. Remember how we found reasons to support the claim that smoking is good for people? If we were able to find support for that claim, we'll find support for ANY claim.

And since honesty is the best policy, you want to take a stand that will make the most sense to you and that will be the easiest and most natural for you to defend.

So the trick is to simply choose one, and the brain will find ways to support it. That's it – it's that simple.

Let's Take a Stand

Let's assume that the easiest and most intuitive stand for us to take with regards to the essay question about men and women is the following:

"Men and women are essentially the same."

Wow – we just **Took a Stand** and completed **Step 1** of **Writing the Thesis Statement!**

Excellent.

Whew! That was a lot of work, wasn't it! 😊

Let's move to **Step 2** of **Writing the Thesis Statement.**

Step 2 of Writing a Thesis Statement:

Writing an Outline of Supporting Evidence

Now that we have chosen our topic and taken a stand, we actually have a complete Thesis Sentence:

“Men and women are essentially the same.”

The Thesis and the Thesis Sentence are essentially the same thing (also known as the Topic Sentence), and it is the most important and the most general sentence that

Summarizes the Entire Essay Completely and Perfectly.

Now, let's consider the following thesis sentence:

‘Men and women are essentially the same biologically, emotionally, and behaviorally.’

Let's take a closer look at this sentence. It has several attributes of a good thesis.

First, it begins with the Subject, which in this case is *‘men and women.’* As a result, it becomes immediately clear what or who the essay is about.

Second, it states the writer's stand right away – that men and women *are essentially the same.*

Third, it immediately shows the reader what the structure of your support will look like. It will have 3 sections: about human *biology, emotions, and behavior.*

Also, remember – there is always more than one way to say something. You may also write the same thesis this way:

‘Men and women are essentially the same in terms of their biology, emotions, and behavior.’

Choose the most elegant way to say it. Visit my blog at www.TutorPhil.com for ideas on how to write better sentences.

Structure of Support – the Second Part of a Thesis Statement

So, again, your opening paragraph must include your thesis sentence, which should ideally appear as the first sentence. And immediately after stating the thesis, tell the reader how you are planning to deliver (i.e. structure) your support.

For example:

'Men and women are essentially the same in terms of their biology, emotions, and behavior. First, they age at a similar pace, are similar anatomically, and have equal physical capabilities. Second, they have similar tendencies to experience such emotions as joy, sadness, and anger. And finally, they engage in similar behaviors, such as falling in love, cheating on their exams, or having great aspirations.'

This above is a complete thesis statement. You may say, but Phil, where's the introduction? Can I just go straight to the point in the very first sentence?

Remember what I told you earlier? Learn to create pure intellectual structure first. If you can understand and apply what I'm teaching you in this and the following sections, trust me – your introductions and conclusions will write themselves (well, not literally, of course).

But read this thesis statement again. Do you see how the process of breaking down your topic into smaller units (or subtopics) paid off? Now you not only have a nice little opening paragraph that serves almost like a table of contents for your reader, but you have a perfect outline right there.

All you have to do at this point is to focus on providing relevant proof for each subtopic (in the order in which you introduced it in the opening paragraph).

The Power of Three

And now is a good time to recall the power of the Magic Number Three, which I introduced on page 30.

Again, let's recall that this number is the largest number that is EASY for the brain to process. But what does this mean to you when you're writing an essay? Well, let's take a look at what it's just done for our thesis statement.

First, let's look again at the thesis sentence – the first sentence of the opening paragraph:

Men and women are essentially the same in terms of their biology, emotions, and behavior.

What has the Power of Three given us here?

First, it has given us three subtopics to divide our topic into, which means we can already visualize the bigger overall structure of our essay:

Section 1 – *Biology*

Section 2 – *Emotions*

Section 3 – *Behavior*

If we're writing a very short essay of about 300 words, then all we need to do at this point is write just one paragraph on each (and then attach a Conclusion, if required).

We forced ourselves to come up with three sections, and it worked. Was it easy? It shouldn't be hard even for a complete beginner. But once you've done some practicing, your brain will do this on autopilot. Three is easy!

Second, the Power of Three has allowed us to divide even further. You need to do that if you want to write a lengthier essay (1,000 – 3,000 words, or even more).

How do you do that? It's very simple.

Let's begin with the first main section. If you are writing about men's and women's physical similarities (or, the body), can you divide this topic into smaller subtopics? What three different things can you write about within the topic called "Human Body?"

Watch:

Section 1: Men and Women in terms of the Human Body:

- a. Aging and life span are essentially the same
- b. Most organs are essentially the same
- c. Strength and endurance capabilities are essentially the same

Now you already have plenty of material for your first section. If you wrote just one paragraph to support each of the a. b. and c., a third of your essay would be completed!

Now can we do the same with the remaining sections? Of course.

Section 2: Men and Women in terms of Human Emotions:

- a. Joy – both men and women can and do experience it
- b. Sadness - both men and women can and do experience it
- c. Anger - both men and women can and do experience it

Section 3: Men and Women in terms of Human Behavior

- a. Both men and women can and do fall in love
- b. Both men and women can and do cheat on their exams
- c. Both men and women can and do aspire to great things in life

And that's the Power of Three, my friend.

Let's do some simple math

Here's a little math lesson (arithmetic, to be accurate) that will show you how easy it really is to come up with all the words or pages you need.

Let's review the main structure of our example about men and women:

Men and women are essentially the same in three ways:

I. Body

- 1. Aging and life span*
- 2. Organs*
- 3. Strength and endurance*

II. Emotions

- 1. Joy*
- 2. Sadness*
- 3. Anger*

III. Behavior

- 1. Falling in love*
- 2. Cheating on exams*
- 3. Aspiring to great things*

Essay Math

If we allow one paragraph for the thesis statement (and introduction), and one paragraph for each of the subsections we've just come up with, then how many paragraphs will our paper have?

That's right: 1 (Thesis) + 9 (3 sections * 3 subsections) = 10 .

So, just by following this simple process, we have outlined enough material to write 10 paragraphs of clean, direct, and intellectually clear content. How about that!

Now, each of these paragraphs will contain as much or as little as you want, depending on your word or page count requirement.

You can probably see that if you wanted to, you could write a book just on this topic where the 9 sections would become 9 chapters. If you continue the process of subdividing into smaller sections a couple of levels deeper, you will definitely have enough material to write a book.

Luckily, all you need is an essay. Whether the requirement is 500 or 1,500 or even 3,000 words, you already have enough subtopics to keep writing until your fingers go numb.

Now you are probably asking 'how do I come up with stuff to write in those subsections?' This will take us to Step 3 of the Essay Writing Process – Writing the Body of the Essay. But first, let's do a few exercises to reinforce what you just learned.

Exercises

I'd like to work on your ability to subdivide into smaller units. I call this skill One-Into-Many (for the purposes of this book – One-into-Three, really). This is probably the most important skill that you can have not only in your writing but in structuring everything else in your college studies.

For now, please keep an open mind and just do the exercises without judging them. Some of the exercise units may appear too basic, even childish, to you. But this is intentional. In order to make sure that these skills become second nature in you, you need to begin with the simplest stuff, and gradually move on to more complex and challenging material.

We'll be subdividing concepts intellectually into smaller units. Basically, as you already found out, this helps you to come up with your content instead of just staring at the blank piece of paper not knowing where to begin.

Exercise

Your task is to use the Power of Three to divide the following concepts. Here's an example:

Lets' take a concept of an EGG. If we wanted to write a paper about an egg, or eggs, what main sections could our paper have?

Possible sections are:

Egg white

Egg yolk

Egg shell

OR

Egg Nutrition Facts

Egg Taste

Egg Recipes

It all depends on what you want to write about. As you can see, you could subdivide anything into subtopics, even such a simple concept as an egg. Most of your writing projects will be a little more complex 😊, but you will have a much easier time with those if you get good on the basics.

So, again:

Egg = egg white + egg yolk + egg shell

Your task is to do the same with the following concepts (or things). You can write them down on any blank piece of paper. Try to come up with three subtopics for each topic:

Television

High School

Learning

Dating

Movies

Don't worry if at first this exercise frustrates you. It is only *seemingly* easy. In reality, it requires active thinking – a process that is dormant in most of us.

I'd like to quote Aristotle, who said that 'the level of man's intellect is in direct proportion to his ability to see structure.' (Note: he was talking about men and women in this statement – about humanity in general – a common way to refer to all people in the older times.)

So, what did you come up with? You can check out a few hints and some of the possible answers in Appendix G on page 105.

On the other hand, if the exercise was too easy for you, just pat yourself on the back, but don't get too proud. More challenging stuff is on the way.

Caveat for a Smart Writer

Now, it's important to address an issue here. You see, some readers would not necessarily be aware that your first sentence is in fact the thesis statement, and that the following sentences are outlining the coming support. Why? Because many readers, including professors, are simply not used to good writing.

They are not used to the kind of writing that is clear, direct, and concise. In that case, you may say, why should I be clear, direct, and concise in my writing? This is a very good question, and I'd like to address it right away.

I'd like to propose a few thoughts here that I won't provide a lot of support for, simply because I don't want to waste your precious time. If you're interested in these issues, visit my website and my blog, where I come to these issues every once in a while in detail.

First, it feels great to stand for what you believe. Do you agree? It is definitely tough sometimes, but if you do it in face of the fear of criticism (which we all have to varying degrees), the emotional and, sometimes, physical rewards are great and truly worth it in the end.

Second, I've learned something in my life that you will probably learn as well if you haven't already: you can't please everybody. I bet you have lots of life experience to support this thought. And whom should you try to please, then? If you just try to please your inner voice that says that you're doing the right thing, then you'll be much happier and probably more successful in your studies, work, life, and even love.

And writing is a way to express yourself much more directly and fully than through any other means (for most of us). This is mostly because when you sit down to write, you usually have the time necessary to go back and edit, removing what you don't want and adding what you do want, while when you're speaking you don't have the luxury of deleting something you just said. So, cherish the opportunity and value your writing – you will be judged on it every time someone reads your work.

I hope you're more or less convinced. And now, I'd like to show you

How to Write a Thesis Statement that Guarantees that Your Reader or Instructor Will Understand it the Way You Intend it to Be Understood

That said, I want to show you a way of writing your thesis so that your readers, including the most important reader your writing must appeal to – your professor, won't miss your intentions. And here it is.

Keep the thesis sentence as it should be – clear, direct, and concise. But when you're writing the rest of your thesis, you may add just a few words to make your intentions clear. So, let's say that your thesis statement is the following:

'Men and women are essentially the same in terms of their biology, emotions, and behavior. First, they age at a similar pace, are similar anatomically, and have similar behavior patterns. Second, they have similar tendencies to experience such emotions as joy, sadness, and anger. And finally, they engage in similar behaviors, such as falling in love, cheating on their exams, or having great aspirations.'

It is possible that your instructor won't catch the clarity of this statement right away, just because he's either used to lengthy introductions that don't go anywhere, or he may be used to just plain disorganization. In either case, you can help him grasp your structure at the first reading by writing it the following way:

'Men and women are essentially the same in terms of their biology, emotions, and behavior. In the first main section of this essay I intend to show that they age at a similar pace, are similar anatomically, and have similar behavior patterns. The second section is devoted to men's and women's similar tendencies to experience such emotions as joy, sadness, and anger. And finally, the last section shows that they engage in similar behaviors, such as falling in love, cheating on their exams, or having great aspirations.'

Let's face it: if you write it like this, even someone who's never read an essay before will understand its structure and will know what to expect. Agreed?

By the way, if your professor or instructor doesn't want you to use the pronouns 'I' or 'We' in your papers, first, it's a good requirement; and second, just get rid of those words. I'll show you how to do that easily in one of the appendices (at the end of the book).

The *Why* Thesis and the *How* Thesis

Almost any thesis you choose for an expository essay will answer one of two questions: either Why? or How? Let's take another look at some of the examples we've dealt with so far:

"Our trip to India left us with mixed emotions. Food and exoticism made it exciting. But the local bureaucracy made it almost impossible to complete our business transactions."

Now, what question does this thesis answer? Well, when someone says, "Our trip to India left us with mixed emotions," what is the first question that pops into your head? You want to know 'why?' don't you?

So, this thesis answers the question *why* the trip created mixed feelings. It did so because while the food and the exoticism were great, the local bureaucracy made life hard.

Now let's take a look at another thesis we already know:

'Men and women are essentially the same biologically, emotionally, and behaviorally.'

What question does this thesis answer? It answers the question how, because it's trying to explain how (or in which ways) men and women are similar.

So, what does this knowledge of the *why* thesis and the *how* thesis give you and how does it help you write an essay?

Here's the answer. When you know what question your thesis (and, as a result, your entire paper) is proposing to answer, it makes it easier for you to subdivide the main topic into sections and subsections.

The *Why* Thesis

If your thesis is a *Why* thesis, then you will have a statement that will say something to the effect of the following:

X is true for the following 3 reasons.

Examples:

"I love New York for three reasons."

"Napoleon lost the war because of X, Y, and Z."

"My sister hates school for six reasons."

The *How* Thesis

If, on the other hand, you have a *How* thesis, then you'll have a statement that will say something like:

A and B do X in the following 3 ways.

Examples:

"College can improve a person's life in four ways."

"Dogs and cats are different in two ways."

"Dogs and cats are different emotionally and intellectually."

Does this make sense? Let's take a closer look at how to develop the *Why* and the *How* theses.

Reasons – the Tool for the *Why* Thesis

Let's start with an example to make it clear right away.

"Medical care should be easily available to everyone for three reasons. First,... Second, ... Finally, ..."

As you can see, *reasons* can be used to help you subdivide your topic. Note here that the number of your *reasons* must correspond to the number of main sections of your essay.

So, in the above example, your thesis would answer the question "Why should medical care be easily available to everyone?"

Ways in which People and Things Do Things– the Tool for the *How* Thesis

Let's now take a look again at the example of men and women being essentially the same:

'Men and women are essentially the same in terms of their biology, emotions, and behavior.'

So, again, let me ask you a question: in how many *ways* are men and women similar?

That's right – they are similar in three ways. You see, sometimes, and for some topics, finding a few *ways* that support the thesis is pretty easy. So, from now on I'll refer to the *Ways People and Things Do Things* as simply *Ways*.

Here is another example:

"Wars can sometimes be justified morally and economically."

In how many *ways* can war sometimes be justified? In two ways – morally and economically.

This means that, how many main sections will this paper have? That's right – two sections – one devoted to moral justification, the other – to economical.

Dividing Using *Ways*

Using *ways* is also one way to begin your process of subdivision of a larger topic. For example:

“Serving in the Navy changed my life in three ways. First, ... Second, ... Finally, ...”

“High-sugar diet ruins health in four ways. First, ... etc...”

“Aerobic activity helps build the body’s immune system in three ways...”

You get the point. Notice that we’ve come back once again to the concept of One-into-Many, which is a part of a larger concept I call ***Creating Structure*** – the most important concept I’m teaching in this book.

So, note that your essay will have as many main sections as the subject of your thesis has *ways*. Three ways = three main sections.

You don’t have to necessarily end your thesis statement with the words ‘in three ways,’ or ‘in four ways...’ The important thing is that you understand what you’re doing and know how to structure your support.

Now, *ways* and *reasons* are not the only modes of subdivision and strategies to begin your essay. But if you can master these two, you’ll never be at a loss for material or get stuck with getting started when you need an essay fast.

Why is this so? Because you can always make these work for you. You see, people and things always do certain things in certain ways and for certain reasons. Now that’s a mouthful. But you can use this fact to help you structure an argument on almost any topic.

Exercise A

Let's try an exercise to get some practice:

Try to incorporate the tactic of *ways* to subdivide the topics that follow. And don't treat this lightly and please do the exercise. Again, I know that it may seem a little too easy or even childish. But as Confucius once said, "I hear and I know; I see and I remember; I do and I understand."

Just imagine that you have to help your little sibling write her entry-level paper. And she was given several topics. And you don't want to write the entire paper for her, but you want to create an outline (or a thesis statement) in order for her to write the content based on it.

And you could write anything you want, as long as it's on the given topic. So, here are the topics (meaning, Subjects of the future essays without the Verbs – you're supposed to come up with the Verbs).

So, the task is to create one *Why* thesis and one *How* thesis using each of the following subjects.

For example:

1. *Vegetables*

- *Why thesis:* Vegetables are excellent food for three reasons.
- *How thesis:* Vegetables benefit health in three ways.

(Remember – each Subject needs a verb. Each of these Subjects either *is* something or *does* something. So, just make something up really quick.)

Complete the following:

2. *Human emotions*

- *Why thesis:* _____
- *How thesis:* _____

3. *Pets*

- *Why thesis:* _____
- *How thesis:* _____

4. *Working for a large corporation*

- *Why thesis:* _____
- *How thesis:* _____

5. *College life*

- *Why thesis:* _____
- *How thesis:* _____

6. *Career change*

- *Why thesis:* _____
- *How thesis:* _____

7. *Raising a child*

- *Why thesis:* _____
- *How thesis:* _____

For possible answers and suggestions, go to Appendix G on page 106.

Exercise B

Write a complete thesis statement on each of the following Subjects. It's up to you whether you'd like to write a Why or a How thesis. Let's try one together:

Subject: *Physical Exercise*

Thesis Statement: *Physical exercise benefits people in three ways. First, it improves the cardiovascular system. Second, it releases endorphins that improve mood. Finally, it helps keep the bodyweight down.*

This looks simple, but will require some mental effort on your part. Let's go:

Subject: Mathematics

Thesis Statement: _____

Subject: Dating

Thesis Statement: _____

Subject: Physical Exercise

Thesis Statement: _____

Again, you'll find the answers and suggestions in Appendix G on page 107.

Step 3 of the Essay Writing Process

Writing the Body of the Essay

The Force of Focus

When you have your complete thesis statement in front of you, the task of coming up with all the material to support the argument is infinitely easier. Now what you have to do is to become a kind of a Zen master, if you will, and just focus on a single unit of the essay at a time without being distracted by the entire paper.

Let me explain. One main reason most students would prefer not to write at all if they had that choice is that it is pretty daunting and painful to open up your word processor and just freeze, staring at the blank piece of paper, not knowing what to write.

The reason that happens is that the student is trying to think of the entire paper at once. I mean, try to support the following statement without first breaking it down: "Wars are sometimes justifiable."

Now, whether you agree or disagree with the above statement, how easy would it be to just sit down and write five pages on it without an outline or breaking the topic into smaller subtopics first?

You might do fine for the first page or so, just writing whatever comes to your mind to support the statement. But after about page two, you'll run out of breath. And now you'll be staring at page 3, which is a blank piece of paper, not knowing what else to write.

Why? Because without having broken the topic down into subtopics, and then into even smaller intellectual units, your brain has to deal with such a vast topic while writing every sentence. This is tremendous effort with poor return.

But if the topic had been broken down into smaller units, then it would become so much easier for the brain to focus on and come up with material. For example, in how many ways is it possible to try to justify war (and fail or succeed)?

If we think about it, then the answer is, in at least two – *morally* and *economically*. Now, the job of coming up with material is much easier, because instead of one vast topic, the brain has two smaller topics to deal with. And it will deal with them one at a time. And if we break down each of those topics into subtopics, the job will become even easier.

It's like trying to accomplish any other seemingly enormous task. It's much easier to break it down into smaller tasks each of which is easy to do individually than to try to do the whole thing at once, which can end up in discouragement.

But now that you have your entire well-developed thesis statement in front of you, it's time to simply focus on one subsection at a time, writing your support for that particular part of the argument.

Examples – the Main Content-Building Weapon

Examples are your best friends in writing an essay for the following reasons:

- They make the essay more interesting by providing details.
- They show the reader that the writer has done her homework.
- They give you the writer a great opportunity to add as much volume to your essay as you want while improving its quality at the same time.

Examples are the most specific building blocks of an essay. And usually they contain pictures.

Your entire essay could contain the thesis statement and its proof that would only consist of examples. In that case, your thesis statement would say something like this:

“Holidays can be awful times, as five examples show.”

And then you would just go ahead and provide the five examples.

What Makes a Good Example?

As I mentioned before, an example is the most specific unit of your support. Now, what does this mean? And, while we're at it, let's explore the statement that you've probably heard many times before in your English classes, but probably never got the precise meaning of it:

Essays should proceed from more general to more specific.

So, let's get this clear once and for all. Consider the following:

America

Florida

Orlando

Disney World

Which of these are more general, and which – more specific? Well, you've probably noticed that this list proceeds from more general to more specific, because Florida is contained in America; Orlando is contained within Florida; and Disney World is inside Orlando.

So, if you're writing an essay about such a vast topic as the United States of America, then, first of all, you might as well be writing a multi-volume book. But, jokes aside, you could provide a section about Florida; then within it you could add a subsection about Orlando; and within that subsection you would finally provide an example about Disney World.

And whatever amount you decide to write about Orlando will be the example, unless you decide to be even more specific and describe your vacation in Orlando. In which case, the vacation will be the example and, therefore, the most specific unit of your essay, unless you decided to describe a particular ride.

In that case, the ride you describe will be the most specific, unless you decide to describe that particular time when you went on that particular ride and swallowed your bubble gum. Then, that particular episode will be the most specific unit of your essay.

And which of these would probably be the most interesting for you to write about and for the reader to read about? I'd bet it would be that particular episode when you swallowed your gum because it's a kind of a story and has a funny element to it. This is a real example!

Also, note that this little incident with the gum would contain pictures, sounds, colors, and maybe even taste. So, as you can see, examples engage the reader the most. And the better you get at providing examples (that is, being as specific as possible), the better grades you will keep getting and the more fun you will have writing.

You Decide the Level of Zooming In

It's good to know that you are in control of how specific you want to be in your essay or in a given section. If you think that you will have enough material without going in as deep as a personal example, then so be it.

Remember, **Zooming In** is there to help you, that's all. So, if you're writing a paper about some event or period in history, for example, and you don't want to get into a lot of detail about a particular episode or historical character, that's fine. You decide the level of how specific you want to get.

An important point to remember, however, is that the more specific you get, the more interesting it becomes. Let me give you an example.

Have you ever attended a lecture about some event or person in history? And the person went on and on about how some political process took place, and this happened, and led to that, and so forth. And you found yourself falling asleep, unable to keep your attention on the lecture?

And have you ever attended a similar lecture on the same subject, and the person was speaking on similar topics and events? But this time you were sitting at the edge of the seat, catching every word, mesmerized.

This happened to me a number of times. And if you haven't experienced something like that yet, you will.

But if you have, what do you think made the difference that made you fall asleep during one lecture, but kept you awake and excited to learn more during the other? I'd bet that the main difference was the level of detail into which the lecturer dug.

It is one thing to hear how a political upturn started, and how the country lost its power due to a political process. It is quite another thing to hear a story how two senators conspired against the emperor and, even while he was speaking, in the broad daylight, he was killed by the infamous assassin who stepped out of the ranks of faithful servants, walked over to the emperor and stabbed him in the back before he could be arrested.

Which lecture would you attend? Yes – specific examples are powerful.

How to combine Reasons, Ways, and Examples.

These three effective methods of creating the building blocks for your paper can be combined. In fact, it is possible to use all three in one essay. This possibility gives you some options.

Consider the following thesis:

People should read books.

Now, when your reader comes across this statement, she will want some support for it. What question is the reader going to ask?

The question 'why,' of course. In other words, she'll want to know why people should read books.

Therefore, your thesis statement should answer this question:

People should read books for three reasons. First, reading exercises the brain, helping keep it healthier. Second, it makes the reader a more interesting person. And finally, reading can improve the overall quality of living.

This above is a complete thesis statement. Now, how many MAIN sections will this paper have? That's right – THREE! Good work.

You see, now that you have a thesis statement like this one, you already have the basic outline for the paper. You know how many sections it will have, and what to put in each section.

Now, how and why would it be helpful to you to combine Reasons, Ways, and Examples in this paper?

It would be helpful because you can further subdivide your paper's content, thereby making it easier to come up with material (and meet the word count requirement).

Now, HOW do you do that?

It's simple.

We already saw an example of this on the previous page, and let's take a look at this thesis statement again:

People should read books for three reasons. First, reading exercises the brain, helping keep it healthier. Second, it makes the reader a more interesting person. And finally, reading can improve the overall quality of living.

Let's consider the first reason to support our claim, namely that reading keeps the brain healthy by exercising it. Can we now ask HOW does reading accomplish that? We could say that reading affects cognitive ability in two ways (or three, or four – as many as you are willing to provide in your paper).

Then, first, reading develops short-term memory, which is activated in the process of reading. And second, it forces the brain to process thoughts that are more complex than the every-day thoughts that comprise most human interaction, whether in life or on TV.

Can you see what we just did? Now, not only do we have the underlying structure for the entire paper, which is 3 sections, but we also have structured our first main section (the one about brain being exercised). How many subsections will this section have? Yes, the answer is two: one about short-term memory, and the other about complex thoughts.

Thesis: People should read books for three reasons.

- I. *Reading exercises the brain, helping keep it healthier. (How? –In two ways)*
 1. *Develops short-term memory*
 2. *Trains to process complex thoughts*
- II. *Reading makes the reader a more interesting person.*
- III. *Reading can improve the overall quality of living.*

We used three REASONS to come up with the three main sections, and then we used two WAYS to come up with two subsections for the *first main section*. Makes sense? Now we can do the same for the remaining main sections. Watch:

What is our second section about? We said that *reading makes a person more interesting*. Now you can ask a question: in which ways is that accomplished? In other words, you're simply asking, 'how so?'

Can we come up with at least two WAYS in which this is accomplished? I'm sure we can. Let's try.

First, reading certain kinds of books can make a person more knowledgeable on certain topics, such as arts and sciences, for example. An avid reader can have more meaningful conversations with a greater number of people. Furthermore, these conversations don't have to be simply small-talk, but could be deeper and more meaningful, which can be lots of fun.

Second, by expanding the reader's horizons, books can lead a person to pursue interests which he might otherwise not even have been aware of. The reader can take up a new hobby, travel to a distant country, or learn a new skill, inspired by a great book.

So, let's take a look at our structure so far:

Thesis: People should read books for three reasons.

I. Reading exercises the brain, helping keep it healthier. (How? –In two ways)

- 1. Develops short-term memory*
- 2. Trains to process complex thoughts*

II. Reading makes the reader a more interesting person. (How? –In two ways)

- 1. Makes a person more knowledgeable*
- 2. Makes a person pursue new interests, hobbies, and skills*

III. Reading can improve the overall quality of living.

Now, as you can see, our *second main section* has been divided into two subsections. Now we know exactly what to write about when we support our claim that reading books can make a person a more interesting human being.

How about the last MAIN section of our paper, the one *about reading improving the overall quality of living*? Can we subdivide it, too? Let's try. Let's come up with two, or even three different WAYS in which reading can improve the overall quality of living.

First, reading books can lead to a higher income. Professionals can improve their skills through reading books on their profession, which can help them sharpen their professional skills and take their professional lives to the next level. As a result, they may claim higher compensation for their work.

Second, reading good books, fiction or non-fiction, can improve relationships, whether at work or at home. If people studied relationships by reading on the subject, perhaps our society would have a lower rate of divorce.

Let's try and come up with one more for this section. The more subsections you're trying to subdivide your paper into, the more quality material you will have to fill your paper up with. And thus,

Third, reading books about healthy living, such as low-calorie cooking, exercise, breathing techniques, or meditation, can lead to better health.

Now, I want you to know that it took me a little more time to come up with the third subsection. The more subsections you try to come up with, the harder the next one will be to think of. But, I bet that, if I really wanted to, I could come up with three more. And so could you. But let's stop at three this time.

And this is what the entire structure now looks like:

Thesis: People should read books for three reasons.

I. Reading exercises the brain, helping keep it healthier. (How? –In two ways)

- 3. Develops short-term memory*
- 4. Trains to process complex thoughts*

II. Reading makes the reader a more interesting person. (How? –In two ways)

- 3. Makes a person more knowledgeable*
- 4. Makes a person pursue new interests, hobbies, and skills*

III. Reading can improve the overall quality of living. (How? –In three ways)

- 1. Can lead to a higher income*
- 2. Can improve relationships*
- 3. Can lead to better health*

Okay, let's recap what we've done here. We came up with three MAIN sections, and then subdivided each into more SUBSECTIONS.

Section 1 has two subsections.

Section 2 has two, and

Section 3 has three.

That's seven subsections altogether. Would you agree that it was relatively easy to do this work? Did it seem hard? Probably not. Not for you. But, believe it or not, we've just completed the most important and, probably, the most intellectually challenging part of creating an essay!

Now, if we wrote only one paragraph in each subsection, we would have seven good paragraphs.

But here's the best news. With the help of EXAMPLES we can add as many paragraphs as our imaginations will allow. Let's consider our last main section, because it's the easiest to support with examples.

How to Create Examples

This is what we stated in the last main section of the previous example:

Reading improves the overall quality of living in three ways:

First, reading books can lead to a higher income. Professionals can improve their skills through reading books on their profession, which can help them sharpen their professional skills and take their professional lives to the next level. As a result, they may claim higher compensation for their work.

Second, reading good books, fiction or non-fiction, can improve relationships, whether at work or at home. If people studied relationships by reading on the subject, perhaps our society would have a lower rate of divorce.

Third, reading books about healthy living, such as low-calorie cooking, exercise, breathing techniques, or meditation, can lead to better health.

First of all, notice that this section looks like an essay in itself. We've subdivided the main topic into so many little subsections that all we have to do now is focus on one subsection (or even one paragraph) at a time, providing examples.

Now, can we provide some examples to support these claims? Let's come up with some to prove the first part – that reading can lead to a higher income.

Example 1:

My mom has been working in the same company for 15 years. She has always been happy there, because she likes her office and the people who work there. But since she is only paid commission, and her income depends directly on her ability to sell the company's services, she was frustrated for many years with insufficient income. For the first ten years on the job, she made slightly less money than average among her co-workers. She wanted to earn more, but just didn't know how. The company's training seemed pretty good, but she already knew it by heart and still wasn't producing as well as she wanted to.

And then, a friend, who also worked in sales in a different company, introduced a book to her. It was a classic book on sales. My mom half-heartedly bought the book and started reading. She very soon realized that the techniques taught in that book were rather different from those she had been learning in the company training.

She began to apply some of the techniques from the book, and within three months her income doubled, to everyone's fascination and my mom's delight. She never expected such dramatic results just from following some advice from a book. But she became excited and decided not to stop learning. Today, she reads one book in her field every month, and her income continues to grow. She is very thankful to her friend for introducing her to that first book about her profession.

This is a personal example, because the author is discussing her own mother. This is a very clear example that convinces the reader that reading books can definitely lead to a higher income, even much higher, in this case.

Please also note the way the example is structured. It reads like a story. And it really is a story. That's what makes it a powerful example.

The first paragraph describes the time before the change occurred. This is when things were not so good – my mom wasn't earning enough money.

In the second paragraph, the story takes a turn – my mom's friend recommends a book to her, and my mom is a bit skeptical, but buys it and reads it, anyway.

And in the final paragraph, we see the result of my mom's taking action. The book improved her income and put her on the path of constantly improving herself through reading. Happy end!

The ending should be happy, of course, because this essay section (just like the entire essay) states the claim that reading books improves lives. If our essay were about the drug use, for example, then many, if not all of our examples would probably have sad endings. Does this make sense?

And you don't have to be a master storyteller to write examples like that. It took me about ten minutes, or even less, to write it. And it's complete fiction – I made it up for the sake of an illustration.

When you come up with examples, if you're writing a simple paper for a composition class (for a class in which you learn how to write essays), you don't really have to provide the real proof. What do I mean by that? I mean that you can basically make things up. Your professor most likely cares only about the quality of your writing rather than the validity of the content.

On the other hand, if you're writing a paper for any other class, such as an art or a science class, then your support must be valid. In other words, you might need to do some research to check your evidence, and to come up with your examples.

In this book, all the examples I provide are only for the purpose of learning how to write, and don't necessarily correspond with real evidence.

So, can you see how easy it is to come up with examples when you know exactly what you need to write, and when you know what kind of an example you're looking for? Simply repeating the process over and over will get you enough material to meet any word count requirement, do you agree?

But if your imagination runs dry, and you just can't think of an example, or if you need an example of real-life evidence, then you may consult Mr. Internet.

How to use the Internet to Get Ideas

It's easy to run out of ideas when writing an essay. One great source of ideas is, of course, the Internet. But you must use it carefully, so that you are not accused of plagiarism.

In order for you to make the best use of the Internet when searching for essay ideas, here are a few rules that you should make your own.

How to Search the Internet for Supporting Material

Here's the most important rule when it comes to using the Internet to get ideas and examples:

Write the Complete Thesis Statement First!

We already talked about the incredible powers your brain has. It can create new ideas out of old ideas and pull out information you didn't know you had from the depths of the subconscious mind.

If we know this, then it becomes logical to first decide what main point and sub-points you want your paper to support, and only then to go online to look for evidence. And here's why.

Let me illustrate. Let's say that you need to go out hunting to provide some food for your family. You have several options. You have a fishing rod to catch fish; you also have a bird trap to catch all kinds of birds; and you have a rifle to shoot down a wild animal such as a boar or a deer.

Which of the following ways to procure food would be the most effective?

Here's the first way

You don't decide whether you need to catch a fish, a bird, or to kill a boar or a deer. No – instead you grab all your equipment, including the fishing rod, the bird trap, and the rifle, and you go out.

By doing that, you're thinking yourself well-equipped to catch or kill any prey you may come across. And, therefore, you think that you have the greatest chance of getting some food.

And you spend your day wandering the woods and going near the river, thinking: "Hey, if I come across a boar, I'll shoot him. If I see a bird, I'll put up the trap. If the weather turns out nice enough to fish and, if I don't find anything else, I'll just fish."

How likely are you to bring home anything that day? Not very likely, because your attention will be too scattered to get a particular animal even if it comes within your sight. Besides, all that equipment you're carrying will only slow you down and make you tired too soon.

Here's the second way

You decide that today is hunting day. And you decide that you're after a boar or a deer. You don't bring anything with you except a rifle, and you head for that neck of the woods where wild animals roam.

You go straight there, knowing exactly what you want and how to get it. How likely are you to bring home some prey?

You probably chose the second way to procure food. And you made the right choice. Of course it's much more productive to know exactly what you're after before you go out to hunt. If you know what you're after, you are much more likely to get it.

As a hunter, you could increase your chances even more by deciding exactly which animal you will be after – deer or boar. Why? Because you would go to one part of the woods to look for one animal, and to another to look for the other.

Do you see how this works? The more clarity you have about what exactly you're after, the more likely you are to get it.

So, how does this apply to doing research on the Internet?

The same principle applies. If you don't know what you're trying to find support for, you're just wandering the "woods of the Internet," so to speak, thinking to yourself, "Well, let me see what shows up so I could use it in my essay."

How likely are you to find something useful? I don't have to tell you that there is so much information on the Internet that your brain will simply become overwhelmed with being bombarded by one piece of information after another. Besides, it will not know what it is looking for, anyway, and will not pick anything up.

On the other hand, if you know, for example, that your thesis is that 'men and women are essentially the same in terms of biology, emotions, and behavior,' then all you have to do is type into Google "*men women biology*," or something like that, and you are so much more likely to find good examples and evidence.

It becomes even easier as you get even more specific. For example, one of our subsections in an earlier part of the book was that "Men and women are equally strong." This is more Zoomed In than just saying that "Men and women are similar physically."

So, it becomes easier, because now you could type into Google something like "physical strength in women." And I'm sure you'll find a lot of relevant material such as personal stories and accounts of great strength in women.

I hope that you can see now how writing out a complete thesis statement first makes your job of searching for stuff on the Internet infinitely easier and more productive.

Once You Find Relevant Material

So, you've written your thesis statement, and you've consulted Mr. Internet for some supporting evidence. And Mr. Internet has generously provided you with two examples. One is very short – just one or two sentences. The other is too long – about a page or so.

You have a challenge. How do you turn the short sentence into a nice, juicy example that will fill up a paragraph? And what do you do with the longer example – you can't just copy and paste it!

First of all, you should never simply copy and paste. If you do, you're plagiarizing. My whole purpose of writing this book is to help you write your own stuff without plagiarizing.

The only occurrence in which you may copy and paste is if you're quoting someone. And then you must provide the source of the quote. Just Google "quoting internet sources" for ways to quote properly.

But what do you do with examples that are too short or too lengthy?

If It's Too Short – Expand

Let's say you come across this sentence:

"It was recorded that a woman in her fifties was able to lift the front end of her car to release her son who had been trying to fix the brake line when the jack broke and he became stuck under the car, breathing his last breath."

This sentence is 47 words long. But you'd like to have about 150-200 words to make for a juicy paragraph. So, why don't you use your imagination and add a little drama to the example:

"In October 1957, John was driving with his mother Mary across the county to the market, when all of a sudden John noticed that his brake pedal began to give too much way. He decided to pull over and check it out. He got out, checked the brake fluid, and it seemed below the normal level. A good mechanic, he jacked up the car, climbed underneath, and started searching for a possible leak. All of a sudden, there was a squeaky noise, and the car seemed to squat. Mary quickly got out of the car and to her horror saw her son immobile under the car. The jack had given way, and now John was facing imminent death. There was nothing left for Mary to do than to try to lift the car up – a feat seemingly impossible for a fragile, middle-aged woman. She got a good grip on the fender, pulled with all her might, and... the impossible happened. The car was lifted high enough and for long enough for John to be able to climb back out from underneath it. She saved his life."

I just used my imagination to write this up (although this is based on a historical fact). Now it's 187 words. And there is nothing wrong with using your imagination to add a little color and drama, if you will. Would you agree that it is more interesting to read now that it has some detail?

Of course, you wouldn't pull stuff from your imagination when writing a scientific research paper – things have to be pure facts in that case, and you must check every piece of evidence for accuracy.

But if you're writing for a writing class, such as ESL Writing, Freshman Composition, or English 2 (Writing Research Papers), or for IELTS or Toefl, then you can definitely do it.

If It's Too Lengthy – Summarize

On the other hand, if the piece of evidence that you found on the Internet is about 400 words, or so, or even much longer, then you may need to shorten it by summarizing.

Let's say, for example, that instead of finding that sentence about John and Mary, and how she saved his life, you come across an entire interview with Mary, or with both John and Mary, in which they tell the whole story.

Or, maybe you incidentally saw a TV program, in which the whole dramatization of the story was given. And being a rather talkative woman, Mary told the interviewer:

- What groceries they were planning to buy at the market
- How good of a mechanic her son John is
- How good John is in other respects, as well (well, she's a mother – she can go on forever about her son)
- What thoughts flashed through her head as she was figuring out what to do
- What happened after she had successfully lifted the car
- One hundred other details

Now, all this stuff, if committed to paper, could take up at least 1,000 words, would you agree? But you don't have to include all of it. Instead, you could simply extract the key points and end up with something like what we have in the 187-word paragraph on the previous page.

I hope this makes sense to you. Remember, you can always ask a question by simply emailing me at tutorphil@tutorphil.com.

One Last Point about Writing the Body of the Essay:

Put all material in the appropriate section (keep it relevant)

Here's one last thing to remember when completing your first draft. One huge complaint professors almost unanimously have is that students can't keep their focus on one particular topic in their writing; that they will jump back and forth between one thing and another, and sometimes veer off somewhere else and end up writing a half of the paper about something totally irrelevant.

It will be such a relief for your professor when he reads your work and everything is in order and nothing is misplaced. Now, what am I really talking about?

Look here. Let's say that you're writing a paper about the benefits of reading books again, and let's use a slightly modified version of it. We subdivide our paper into three main sections. Let's call these sections *A*, *B*, and *C*:

Section A – Reading can improve relationships.

Section B – Reading can improve mental health.

Section C – Reading can improve personal finances.

Now that you have your basic structure, it is crucial to keep all the material within the appropriate section. For example, when you're discussing how reading affects relationships, and you're therefore in section A, do NOT suddenly begin discussing how reading improves mental health or increases income. Do you see what I mean?

In other words, keep all material relevant. And, of course, don't discuss anything that may be irrelevant to your paper altogether. For example, when discussing how books can make a person more educated, you may be tempted to add that it is beneficial to watch educational programming on TV as well.

But since your paper is about reading books and not about watching TV, you should narrow your focus to reading books. There are numerous things in this world that can improve relationships and health, and increase income. But because your paper is about reading, you must limit it to that exact topic.

If you don't, you run the risk of your grade being lowered, and for a good reason.

The same rule applies to your subsections.

If your section **C** is about how reading can improve personal finances, then two subsections you can subdivide your paper into can be:

C1 – Reading certain books that pertain to certain professions can improve professional skills, which in turn can lead to a promotion or higher sales, which is very likely to result in a higher income.

C2 – Reading books on financial education can lead to better spending and saving habits, which can result in more money saved and invested.

And now, just to hammer it down, discuss **ONLY *earning money*** in subsection **C1**, and **ONLY *saving and investing money*** in subsection **C2**.

Yes, this is how meticulous you should be in your writing. Think about it this way: you will only be happy as a writer of essays if you know exactly what you're doing when you write.

You may say, but most readers will never even be aware of how perfectly structured my writing is! So, why even bother to work so hard at making it perfect?

Here are several points:

- You are writing for college professors, who are usually sharp readers.
- Whether the reader is consciously aware of the structure or not, trust me, he will be subconsciously aware, and that will make all the difference in the impression your writing is bound to make.
- There is great power in knowing what you're talking about. If the intellectual structure of your writing is flawless, you will have not only easy time defending your grade, but you'll also have lots of fun doing it. (More on defending your term papers later.)
- The closer you can get to the level of clarity in writing that I'm teaching you, the more you will make yourself stand out from the crowd. Other students don't have this book, your secret weapon, and probably never learned and never will learn essay writing on this level.

Part III

Once You Have Your First Draft

When your first draft is done, you may very well be satisfied with what you've written. But don't submit just yet. Read through it, editing and correcting any obvious mistakes and typos.

You may need to do some additional work, such as adding some more material or writing a conclusion. In the following pages, you will find a bunch of useful suggestions.

How to add words and improve quality at the same time.

There are two kinds of ways to add words to your essays – the bad ways and the good ways. You should know what both the bad and good ways to add words look like.

Bad Ways to Add Words

Repeating material.

One thing your professor will definitely notice is when you repeat stuff. I catch repetitiveness right away in my students' papers. One simple statement in the beginning of the paper can reappear in the end, and I'll catch it. Experienced readers do it automatically – and your professors are experienced readers.

So, don't simply repeat things over and over. You have enough tools in this book to avoid repetition and to keep coming up with new pieces of evidence when you need them.

Putting in irrelevant material.

What does it mean to keep it relevant? It means to discuss only your subject without getting distracted and talking about things that don't belong in your essay at all.

If your essay is about dogs, then cats should appear nowhere in the essay (unless, of course, it is intellectually intentional, such as when discussing the natural hostility of dogs towards cats, and vice versa, served to prove a point about dogs).

Keep it to the point. Each and every sentence in your paper must serve to support the thesis. If it doesn't, it doesn't belong in the essay. When you catch yourself writing such a sentence, or even a section of the paper, just cut it out. By the time you've done enough work with this material, coming up with relevant content should pose no significant challenge to you at all.

Writing “wordy” sentences.

This is another bad way to add volume. Consider the following sentence:

In my opinion, I believe that it is a fact that there are many people who want to lose weight.

Wow! That was a mouthful! Let’s slice off the superfluous words one chunk at a time.

I believe that it is a fact that there are many people who want to lose weight.

Of course it is your opinion. If it were not, you wouldn’t be writing it. Let’s slice off another chunk:

It is a fact that there are many people who want to lose weight.

I believe that and *In my opinion* are pretty much the same thing that just adds wordiness. Let’s continue:

There are many people who want to lose weight.

It is a fact that is just plain fluff. Don’t use it – it’s bad tone. Your sentence works perfectly without it:

There are many people who want to lose weight.

And if you want to be really down to the skin and bones, here’s your to-the-point version:

Many people want to lose weight.

How about it!

Two great ways to add words are providing extra examples and adding a new section

Adding an example

Let's say your word count requirement for the essay is 1000 words, but you only have 800. That's pretty close, but if your professor counts the words (which he will), your grade may drop significantly.

In this case, adding just one example can add the extra 200 words without being repetitious or irrelevant.

For example, let's say we're still writing that paper about reading books. In subsection **C2** we discuss how reading certain books can teach the reader how to save money.

What examples can we provide to support this claim? Well, do you know anyone who has benefited from any such books? If you do, that is one example. If you know more than one person, you will have more than one example.

If you don't know anyone like that, you could go to, let's say, Amazon.com, look up a book on personal finance, and then just check out the reviews. Some of them will contain testimonials – little stories of success from people who bought and read the books, and applied the knowledge. Please note that when you're using material from the internet or anywhere else, always provide your reader with the source or refer back to the section on how to use the Internet for ideas.

When you're writing out a new example, you could go into as much detail as you want. As long as you're not being wordy or repetitious inside the example, you're building up the volume of your paper in a legitimate way. And not only that, but you're actually improving the quality of your paper.

When you're finished writing out the example and you're still short of your word count requirement, guess what? Just write another example that supports the same claim. How many times can you repeat the process? Until you've met the word count requirement.

If you've been following my method, you could add an example within any section or subsection of your paper at any time. This is because each section and subsection discusses something slightly different (but all united by a common topic).

If you end up having five examples in one section, but only two in another section, and you need more words, then just add an example to the section that has only two examples, making the essay more balanced. Get it?

Adding a Section.

If your paper is way too short (e.g. 600 words) and you need to add a significant amount of material (to make it 1,200 words), maybe it's a good idea to add a whole new section to your paper.

Let's go back to our paper about reading books (just to beat it to death). If you remember, our thesis was that

Reading books is beneficial, and it benefits people in three ways.

And these were the main sections:

Section A – Reading can improve relationships.

Section B – Reading can improve mental health.

Section C – Reading can improve personal finances.

Now, is it possible to come up with one more section for this topic? In other words, can we find another WAY in which reading can benefit a person?

Of course, we can! All we have to do is to sit down and think for a minute or two. As I'm sitting here and writing this, another section is not immediately apparent. But let's delve into this process in more detail, shall we?

So far in our paper, we've discussed human relationships, mental health, and personal income.

Now, what are some other areas of human existence? We won't even think of these in terms of reading or books. We could simply create a short list of possible points, and then pick out the best one. So, let's go:

1. Physical Health
2. Spiritual Life
3. Hobbies

I think we have enough to work with. So, we only need one more section. What's the best choice out of these three?

Let's see. Let's figure out which of these will intellectually suit our paper best. First, Physical Health. Now, we already have a nice section about mental health, don't we? If we added a section on physical health, would it work?

Well, yes, it would work but it wouldn't be the best option. You see, while the process of reading does exercise the brain, training the body is not accomplished strictly through reading. We're just brainstorming at this point.

So, let's keep looking. How about Spiritual Life? Is reading more likely to influence a person's spiritual world than the physical? Of course. There are probably thousands and thousands of books that could improve a person's spiritual life (some religious books would be the best example).

Now what about Hobbies? Well, it's possible to read about some hobbies and learn more about them. But as soon as a hobby is acquired, is reading really essential to it? It depends on the hobby.

And do hobbies necessarily improve the quality of life? That's debatable.

So, it looks like we've arrived at the choice. Our Section D will be about how reading books may improve or enrich the reader's spiritual life.

Now, this new section will constitute a good quarter of our entire paper. This means that, if we had 1200 words in the first three sections, this last section could easily add about 400 words to it.

Your rewritten thesis statement would look something like this:

Reading books benefits people in four ways. First, reading can improve relationships. Second, reading can improve mental health. Third, it can improve personal finances. And finally, it often enriches the reader's spiritual life.

And the process for getting material to fill up the fourth section is the same as for the first three sections. Just use Reasons, Ways, and Examples, or pick and choose which of these methods of support will work for you in this particular section.

Introductions and Conclusions

Now that you've learned the fundamentals of writing essays, it's time for us to discuss the non-fundamentals. Why do I call introductions and conclusions 'non-fundamentals?'

First, let me ask you a question. Has what we've discussed so far made sense to you? I hope that my material has made sense to you intellectually as well as intuitively. I mean, while you were reading and, hopefully, applying this material, did you at some point say to yourself, 'Hey, this makes sense! Hey, this is just the kind of information I was missing in the classroom!'

If so, then you'll notice that we've been focusing on the 'meat and potatoes' of the writing process, so to speak. And throughout your college career and, most likely, beyond, you will have to include two kinds of material in your writing: the essential and the non-essential.

So far we've been covering the essentials. And now that we've come to the introductions and conclusions, just remember this: these parts of your writing are purely cosmetic. That's right, introductions and conclusions do not contribute to the intellectual meaning of your essay.

So, what does that mean? Does this mean that you shouldn't write them? Not necessarily.

This means that, depending on your instructor, you will submit papers written with or without introductions and with or without conclusions.

Look, often your professor will want an introduction and a conclusion, but not always. The best thing to do is to simply ask your instructor what he wants.

The main purpose of your investment in this book was probably to get rid of the anxiety associated with writing – something that is a very common experience. One other reason was to improve your grades.

Then, talking to your professor in order to understand his essay preferences and requirements is a very simple but crucial step.

Usually, the professor will tell you exactly how he prefers your essay to be structured. Listen carefully, don't judge, and just do it. It's that simple.

So, again – in order to find out whether you need to write an Introduction or a Conclusion or not,

Just Ask Your Instructor.

That's it – it's that simple.

Introductions

Again, the most direct and powerful way to begin an essay is to just state the thesis right away. But, since some professors will require you to write an introduction, here's how to do it.

An introduction should be really short – no more than a paragraph.

So, what do you put there?

The easiest way to write an introduction is to provide an example. That's right. You could either write a new example to support any of your main points, or just grab one of the examples that you already have in your essay and just cut and paste it to the beginning.

Let's consider the paper we've been writing together – about reading books. Here's the thesis again:

People should read books for three reasons. First, reading exercises the brain, helping keep it healthier. Second, it makes the reader a more interesting person. And finally, reading can improve the overall quality of living.

The example of an introduction below would work for a longer paper (1,500 – 5,000 words). For shorter essays, just write a sentence or two.

So, let's write an introduction. I'll just use a personal example.

“When I was about twenty one years old, I read a book titled Piano Lessons. It had been my dream to play an instrument, especially piano, ever since I was a teenager. Our apartment didn’t have enough room to house an instrument that big, so I never learned. And I had always thought that unless a person learned an instrument as a child, it was impossible, or extremely difficult to learn it as an adult. But then I happened upon that book, and it changed my life. The book is a true story of a gentleman in his forties who started taking piano lessons for the first time, written in first person. The feelings of joy and accomplishment fill the pages of the book as the author describes his quest to play a particularly difficult piece called Traumerei by Schumann. To make a long story short, I was inspired. I bought an electronic piano that was full-size with weighted keys, and started taking lessons. A year later I was playing Beethoven’s Fur Elise in its entirety. The book had changed my life, and it’s very fulfilling to me to share the insight I got. And the insight is that (and now we can state our thesis) reading books can change a person’s life for the better. First, reading exercises the brain, helping keep it healthier. Second, it can make the reader a more interesting person. And finally, reading can improve the overall quality of living.”

Of course, this example could have been placed where it really belongs – in the section about how reading can improve the overall quality of living. But, we chose to use it for our introduction and, as you can see, it works.

You can use an example that would support any part of the thesis – meaning, any section or even subsection of the paper. Just use your judgment. Choose an example that you think is the most interesting, or “attention-grabbing.”

Starting with an example is not the only way to write an introduction. If you go online and do research, you’ll get all sorts of advice on what to do. But you see, if you are writing something other than an example, then, chances are, you’re discussing something that either is at risk of being irrelevant or is in fact completely irrelevant to your paper. And you want to avoid being irrelevant at any cost.

Conclusions

The best and the easiest way to write a conclusion is simply to summarize your thesis, using different wording and with less detail. In order to do that, simply read your thesis statement and summarize it, trying not to repeat the words verbatim. Let's say, for example, that this is your thesis statement:

'Men and women are essentially the same in terms of their biology, emotions, and behavior. First, they age at a similar pace, are similar anatomically, and have equal physical capabilities. Second, they have similar tendencies to experience such emotions as joy, sadness, and anger. And finally, they engage in similar behaviors, such as falling in love, cheating on their exams, or having great aspirations.'

Sounds familiar, right? So, how would we turn this into a Conclusion? Let's see:

To conclude, men and women share biological, emotional, and behavioral attributes. They have the same tendencies in most physiological processes; they react with the same range of emotions to different circumstances; and they do similar things in similar ways.

Fair enough? We said the same things as in the opening paragraph, but changed a bunch of words. And, voila – we have a conclusion. It's as simple as that.

Let's do another one.

Thesis statement:

Reading books benefits people in four ways. First, reading can improve relationships. Second, reading can improve mental health. Third, it can improve personal finances. And finally, it often enriches the reader's spiritual life.

Conclusion:

To conclude, books have the power of changing people's lives. Countless relationships have improved; many people have improved their mental health. Books have also moved people to change their financial destinies and made a positive difference in many people's spiritual lives.

Keep it simple. But also don't forget to ask your professor what his idea of a good essay conclusion is. Maybe he'll tell you he doesn't need one. Even better for you, then – you may skip it altogether without feeling guilty or worrying about your grade.

Appendix A

7 Term Paper Grade Boosters

1. Try to Stick to the *Subject – Verb – Object* Model in your Sentences

I'd like to come back to the concept of a sentence. The word sentence comes from the Latin word *sententia*, which means *thought*.

So, each sentence is in fact, a thought. And when you're having a thought, you're necessarily thinking about *something*. That something is your Subject. And every single sentence you write will always have a Subject. It will also always have a Verb, and the verb describes what the Subject does or is.

So, whenever you're writing a sentence that is more or less long and complex, and you feel that you're kind of messing it up (and you should try writing more sentences like that – it would impress your professors, if they are written well), try to stick to the SVO model.

Once you understand that a sentence is essentially a thought, and any thought must be about something, you'll discover many great ways to write better sentences. Here is an example:

Riding my bicycle, I struck a post.

This sentence begins with a verb, and it's a good sentence. But I'd like to simply illustrate how you can rewrite in order to begin it with the Subject:

I struck a post while riding my bicycle.

Now this sentence begins with the Subject, which is the word "I." This way it's easier to avoid all sorts of mistakes, especially when you write longer sentences.

2. Try to Get Rid of the Use of *there is* and *there are*

Consider the following sentence:

There are many people who want to lose weight.

How can we improve this sentence? Well, what (or whom) is this sentence really about? It's about people (or many people, in this case). That's the Subject.

What are the People doing? In other words, what's the verb? They *Want* (in this case – to lose weight). So, we already have our basic structure of the sentence. And why not just begin the sentence with the Subject and the verb, just like in the previous example?

This way, the previous sentence becomes simply:

Many people want to lose weight.

Do you see how easily we got rid of *there are*? Now, it's a much cleaner, more elegant and more direct sentence. A B sentence has turned into an A sentence.

3. Avoid Using *I* or *We*, unless Used as a Personal Example

Let's say that you're writing an essay on the horrors of war. And you're describing the events in a lot of detail, trying to make the picture as vivid and, perhaps, disturbing, as possible. And at some point you say,

I think that any soldier would have done the same in that situation.

Now, what or whom is this sentence about as it is written? Well, the subject of the sentence is *I*, and the verb is *Think*. So, the sentence (as written) is about the author. What is the author doing? He's thinking.

But what is the essay really about? The essay is about the horrors of war. Therefore, what or who is the real subject of that sentence? What or whom is it really about?

It's about the soldier, of course. The soldier is right there on the battlefield; he's part of the war. The author of the essay is not part of the war. And when the author makes himself the subject of the sentence that is really supposed to be about war, he distracts the reader from the real subject.

Does this make sense?

Therefore, the sentence instead should read:

Any soldier would have done the same in that situation.

Now, the sentence is about war and not about the author. Now it is much cleaner and more direct.

But what if the author is a soldier and is part of the war? Then, of course, it is okay to use *I* or *We* in a personal example, because the author may have good material to support his arguments. And, of course, his own experience will have to include the use of the words *I* or *We*.

At the same time, the expression 'I think that' still distracts the reader because the narrative then shifts away from the battlefield and into the head of the author. Using 'I think that' is unnecessary. If you as a writer didn't think so, you wouldn't be writing so. But you are writing so because 'you think so.' I hope you're convinced.

4. Get Rid of the Word 'You'

As you read this ebook, you know that I'm using the word 'you' all the time. Why? Because I'm addressing you directly and expect you to take certain kinds of action.

This material is not an essay – it's a manual. Essays try to accomplish a different end, which is to present an argument and prove it using evidence. That's it. Therefore, it's best not to address the reader directly in your essays. For example:

You don't have to be a good swimmer to enjoy a vacation in the Caribbean.

This sentence addresses the reader by using the word 'You.' However, I'd bet that the author isn't even trying to address the reader so much as he's trying to convey a message, or to make a general statement.

How would you rewrite the sentence to make it more elegant and direct? Remember, there is always more than one way of saying something. Let's try:

Being a good swimmer isn't necessary to enjoy a vacation in the Caribbean.

Or:

A vacation in the Caribbean can be enjoyed without knowing how to swim.

Or:

Swimming skills are not necessary to enjoy a vacation in the Caribbean.

In each case, the real subject of the sentence is a vacation in the Caribbean. And now that we've got rid of the word 'You,' the sentence is more direct and, best of all, you'll get a better grade for it if you can keep avoiding using this word like this throughout your paper.

Let's take another sentence:

"You don't need to make radical changes to your diet to lose weight."

Assuming that this sentence is an attempt to make a generalization, it could be rewritten thus:

"Radical changes in the diet are not necessary to lose weight."

Now this sentence is not only shorter and, therefore, more direct, but it is also more elegant as a result of cutting out the unnecessary 'you.'

5. Avoid Using Fancy Words

In your writing, try your best to use only the words you fully understand. I know that it's hard sometimes, but do your best. Nobody likes to read an essay that was written like a legal document.

It's better to write a sentence in a simple language and be understood than to use all the fancy, rare, and complicated words and come across as a person who's not sure what exactly he is talking about. For example:

*The first reason that I am trying to **convey** is that the students who have good habits will have more friends, which will have beneficial effects on their success.*

The word "**convey**" is used inappropriately here. Why not put it simply? Try this:

First, the students who have good habits will have more friends, which will have beneficial effects on their success.

Here's another misuse:

*Another reason I want to **emphasize** is that soccer not only benefits health, it is also great for developing the ability to work as a team.*

The word “**emphasize**” is just not needed here. The author is simply listing reasons one by one. So, the best way is, again, to put it simply:

Another reason is that soccer not only benefits health, it is also great for developing the ability to work as a team.

The reason this student wrote these sentences using these words like that was that he was not quite sure what the words meant, but was trying to make a good impression on the reader by “enriching” his language. Remember – use the words that you fully understand. If not sure, just look up the word in the dictionary before you include it in your writing.

6. Use “He” or “She,” but not “He or She”

Different professors have different opinions about how to overcome the problem of gender discrimination in writing when using personal pronouns. Some advocate simply writing “he or she” every time. Others will simply use “he” or “she” universally, depending on their own genders.

The best thing to do is to pick one, at least for a section of the paper. Just pick either “he” or “she,” and stick to it throughout your essay.

Or, if the essay is long enough, you may alternate. This means you could write “he” in the first half of the essay, and “she” in the second half, or vice versa.

You may have noticed that I switch from writing “he” to writing “she” every now and then. But I never write “he or she,” because it’s simply annoying.

You may want to ask your instructor what he prefers, and then just follow his guidelines.

(Please not that I didn’t write “You may want to ask your instructor what he or she wants, and then follow his or her guidelines.” Do you see how annoying it may be?)

7. Use the Active Voice

Which sentence do you like better?

I ate pizza for lunch today.

Or

Pizza was eaten for lunch by me today.

Yes – I like the first sentence, too.

The first sentence is in the active voice. The second – in the passive. That's the difference. Use the active voice whenever you can. It's just better.

Appendix B

How to write without the use of 'I' or 'We'

Let's take the following sentence:

"I think that colleges should eliminate their core curricula for several reasons."

This sentence can be made more elegant by removing the 'I' from it. This one is easy – just cut out the phrase 'I think that:'

"Colleges should eliminate their core curricula for several reasons."

Now the sentence is more elegant because it focuses on what the real subject is – 'college,' not 'I.'

Let's try to eliminate 'we' from the following sentence:

"We tend to manipulate others."

Now, who is the author referring to when writing the word 'we?' Is he referring to all humans? To all Americans? To all men or women? Well, it's not clear.

Assuming that the writer is trying to make a general statement about all of us humans, the sentence should state that exactly:

"Humans tend to manipulate others."

Or

"People tend to manipulate others."

Now there's no confusion about who this sentence is referring to. In other words, it is clear what the subject is.

Appendix C

How to come up with ideas

Refer to this section whenever you have to come up with your own essay topic out of thin air, and are not even given any guidelines.

What to write?! What to write?! This question plagues every writer who has to face the blank sheet of paper on an early morning.

Well, first of all, your professor will most likely either give you a list of topics, or suggest a topic, at least. This may seem restrictive, but it really helps.

But sometimes you will be faced with a problem of coming up with your own topic – and that can be challenging.

So, here are some ideas about how to come up with a topic for a good paper quickly.

Think of something you have been thinking about or researching lately. It doesn't have to be something you've been researching for a school project or for work. It could be (and, ideally, should be) something that you're personally interested in – a hobby, a favorite sport, or even your pet.

For example:

- My dog Sparky
- My dance class
- My parents
- My husband/wife

Okay, enough ideas for now.

Now you're thinking to yourself, "How can an 800-word essay grow out of such an everyday topic?"

Fair enough. Let's continue the process. Out of this list, let's pick out one topic that you'll be most knowledgeable and most willing to talk about. It would also help if it were something you would have fun thinking and researching about.

First, remember that you don't have to write about your own pet, hobbies, parents or any kind of relatives, or significant others. No – you could simply talk about relationships in general, such as: parents, boyfriends, girlfriends, dogs, dancing, etc.

Notice that each of the nouns I just listed is a potential Subject of your thesis. And what must each thesis have? That's right – a Subject and a Verb.

But before you choose your verb, you must choose the actual subject. So, why not choose by the process of elimination? How about the topics of your parents or your spouse or significant other? Remember that a paper about someone close to you, or even a general topic such as parents in general, etc., can get pretty personal. Is that okay with you? Is that what you want? Or would you rather stay away from such a topic?

If you don't want to discuss something that might be too personal, that is just fine. But keep in mind that the more personally you've been involved with any topic, the more material you'll be able to come up with more easily.

So, again, if you're uncomfortable discussing your personal relationships, or are concerned that even writing about relationships in general might force you to write something that would be too personal, then simply drop these topics.

On to the next topic – let's say, your pet – your cat or dog, or fish, or a hamster. Can you write a lot about your pet or pets in general? If you don't think so, then, trust me, I can convince you that you can.

But let's choose something that would seem like a perfect topic – comfortable emotionally and easy to come up with material about.

How about that dance class you've been attending, or those dance lessons you've been taking?

Does dancing contribute to your life? How is it affecting your life? Can you write 2-3 pages about it?

Again, keep in mind that you could write about your own dancing lessons or dancing lessons in general, or even just dancing itself in general.

It looks like we've nailed the topic. Volumes have been written on the subject of dance and the ballet, so you could definitely write your 800 words.

Now, let's narrow down on the exact subject – will it be dance in general, ballet, or your own experience with dancing?

Let's say you choose your own dance lessons. Great! You have enough experience with it to discuss it in detail.

So, *Dance* is our Subject. Now what about the Verb? What about dance do you want to write?

Your thesis could be simply that dancing lessons can greatly improve a person's quality of life in a number of Ways. Or, that it's an enjoyable challenge for a number of Reasons. Or, that it can lead to great friendships and even romantic relationships, as a number of Examples would show.

Do you see what I'm doing? I'm simply thinking on paper. Look, I hope you can see now that it's pretty easy to come up with stuff when you actually sit down to do it instead of freaking out about the deadline.

So, to recap:

To come up with a topic when you have no pointers whatsoever from your professor:

1. Make a list of Subjects (nouns that will represent what your paper is going to be about.)
2. Eliminate a few that you might not feel comfortable discussing if you went into a lot of detail.
3. Out of the remaining Subjects, choose one that you have the most personal experience with, and just decide on it.
4. Only then choose your Verb by creating another list of possible things you could discuss with regards to your Subject.
5. Choose a favorite Verb and just decide on it.
6. Follow the steps described earlier in this book to break down the topic into subtopics, creating main sections, subsections, and so on.
7. Proofread for structure and grammar.
8. Submit and live happily ever after.

Appendix D

How to always submit term papers on time

When I first started teaching college-level composition, I thought that the best way to write a paper was to break down the process into at least two sessions. The first one would be to write your thesis statement, including the thesis itself as well as the structure of proof (enumerating the main sections of the support for your argument).

And then in the next session, which would take place the next day or so, I would advise to write the supporting sections. Sometimes, assuming that the students who are overwhelmed with all the college work and their jobs have very limited time to write on a given day, I would even suggest writing a main section per day. So, to finish a term paper would require several sittings and several days.

And this may work for you, if you like the idea. This approach allows you to work on a tight daily schedule.

However, I've learned that the best way to have a paper completed, if it's no longer than 10 pages or so, would be in one sitting. This usually works for several reasons.

First, each hour of uninterrupted focus equals two hours of scattered attention. So, writing a paper in one shot actually saves time.

Secondly, it takes not only time but mental effort to come back to your material and actually remember what you wrote last time every time you come back to your work. If you do that, you'll notice that, even after you've read over what you had written last time, it still takes some time for it to kind of sink in and put you in a creative writing state.

So, try to write the whole thing in one shot. Or at least, in one day. But better, in one uninterrupted session. This is what I do when I write something short.

Don't feel guilty about writing your paper last minute. It's okay, as long as it's quality writing. And it can and will be of quality if you follow the steps in this book.

Appendix E

How to deal with professors

When in college as well as in life, remember: people do things the way they were taught, or the way they are used to doing them. And it is usually futile labor to try to convince them that what they've been doing could be improved.

Ever seen a college professor admit he was wrong? It happens. But don't count on it when it comes to his ideas about writing. This seems to be a very touchy subject for most education professionals, including myself. 😊

And that's only part of the problem. Another part of the problem is that there are as many ideas about what a perfect paper should look like as there are professors in this world.

Some will want introductions, but not conclusions. Others will want conclusions, but not introductions. Still others will want both, and still others – neither. Some will allow the use of 'I' and 'You,' and others won't. You get the idea.

But there is something that unites almost all, or maybe even all college professors out there. A common problem unites them: most college papers submitted are of such poor quality that professors don't know how to grade them.

And this problem is wide-spread. My own experience as a college instructor has been that my English 1 students knew how to write – because I taught them how.

But my students in other classes, such as "Introduction to Literature," submitted papers of such poor quality that I had to conduct an English 1 session within that class just in order for the class as a whole to succeed.

So, what are you to do?

Well, whenever you ask yourself a question, "What do I do?" remember to first ask yourself, "What are my goals?" I'd like to remind you the purpose of this book, which has been manifold:

1. To teach you enough writing skills for you to succeed in college.
2. To give you the confidence that comes from knowing exactly what you're doing when you're writing an essay.
3. To remove the unnecessary stress that comes from your professor's writing requirements forever.

If these are your goals, then, I hope, this book has helped you to accomplish them. And then, if your professor is still unsatisfied with your writing, you know how to defend it. Your writing is well-structured and to the point. As far as the introductions and conclusions are concerned, you have probably already asked your professor whether he wants you to include them or not.

So, if you've done all this homework, but your grade is still not where you want it to be, it could be for one of two reasons. Your writing may need more work in terms of overall quality, including the structure, the quality of the sentences, and grammar. Or, maybe, your professor is just not perceiving the structure of your paper. If you're not sure about the quality of your own writing, take it to a peer tutor, or stay with your professor after class and go over the mistakes you might have made.

If, on the other hand, you're pretty confident about your overall structure and meaning, including grammar, then it may be necessary for you to confront your professor, asking him what criteria he had used to come up with the final grade.

If your professor is reasonable enough, he will give you the clear guidelines that he used to give you the grade. Sometimes, he will actually take a closer look at your writing and change his mind. This happens. I know from personal experience, because I've changed the student's grade when confronted by the student more than once in my career. 😊

So, don't be afraid to confront your professor. After all, you've worked hard on your paper and, if the grade is unsatisfactory, you have a right to an explanation of how your grade was arrived at.

Appendix F

Become a Superstar Student

I thought I'd dedicate the final chapter to using the techniques you've learned in this book to becoming extraordinary in all aspects of your studies, not just writing. If you think about it, what does all college studies, as well as pretty much learning anything new, is all about?

It's about taking in new information, processing it in your head, and then applying it in your behavior, speech, or writing. That's pretty much it. In this book, you've been learning and relearning one of two fundamental skills that I teach, which I call Creating Structure. The other fundamental skill is Perceiving Structure, and it helps in reading difficult texts.

Creating Structure is concerned with your output, such as writing essays, for example. Perceiving Structure, on the other hand, is a concept that is concerned with your input, such as reading an article or a novel, or even watching a movie.

If you master both of these skills, nothing could ever stop you from becoming not only a Superstar Student in college, but a Superstar Professional, or just becoming absolutely outstanding in anything you do.

And the mastery of these skills takes some work. By reading and applying this material, you made the first major step. Now, don't let yourself off the hook. You see, I know that you found this material very valuable, even if intuitive. But I promise you that, if you reread and practice it over and over, you'll master it and could even teach it to others.

I wish you a great writing life!

Tutor Phil

Appendix G

Exercise Suggestions and Possible Answers

Suggestions for Exercises from page 42 : Dividing Topics into Subtopics:

Television:

- Educational Programs
- Entertainment
- News

High School

- Classes
- Exams
- Sports

Learning

- Depends on the teacher
- Influences the future
- Can be fun or frustrating

Dating

- Can be fun or a nightmare
- Can lead to happiness or misfortune
- Can be expensive

Movies

- Are fun sometimes
- Can be a waste of money
- Can convey a wrong message

Exercise A in creating *Why* and *How* Thesis Statements (from Page 51)

Possible Answers:

Human emotions

- *Why thesis: Human emotions are fascinating for three reasons.*
- *How thesis: Human emotions affect people's lives in three ways.*

Pets

- *Why thesis: Pets make great friends for three reasons.*
- *How thesis: Pets benefit people in three ways.*

Working for a large corporation

- *Why thesis: Working for a large corporation is great for three reasons.*
- *How thesis: Working for a large corporation can ruin a person's health in three ways.*

College life

- *Why thesis: College life is fun for three reasons.*
- *How thesis: College life can develop a personality in three ways.*

Career change

- *Why thesis: Changing careers can be stressful for three reasons.*
- *How thesis: Changing careers can ruin a person's financial life in three ways.*

Raising a child

- *Why thesis: Raising a child is a huge responsibility for three reasons.*
- *How thesis: Raising a child affects the parents in three ways.*

Exercise B from page 53

Suggestions

Subject: Mathematics

Thesis Statement:

Learning Mathematics can improve a person's life in three ways. First, strong mathematical skills are mandatory in today's technological job market. Second, strong math skills develop a person's logical skills. And finally, knowing math is simply useful in daily life.

Subject: Dating

Thesis Statement:

Having good dating skills is important for a successful romantic life for three reasons. First, dating skills help a person get the initial date. Second, they can help the couple form a good, meaningful long-term relationship. And finally, good dating skills can prevent excessive heartache in case of a breakup.

Subject: Physical Exercise

Thesis Statement:

Physical exercise benefits people physically, mentally, and emotionally. It improves the cardiovascular health and helps lose and maintain weight. It causes better blood flow to the brain, improving memory and concentration. And it helps the brain release endorphins – the natural happy substance.

About the Author:



Philip Saporov got his dual B.A. in English and Film from Brooklyn College, City University of New York. He is currently finishing up his graduate studies and working on his Master's Thesis in English with a concentration in Comparative Literature.

His main focus today is threefold:

- Turn the pain of writing essays into fun for college students all over the world
- Help them get excellent grades in all classes that require beginning and advanced reading and writing across the disciplines
- Give them the courage and confidence to succeed in spite of all the difficulties