

Teaching Writing

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Instructions: Read the sample paragraph below. Then do the following:

1. Write down or mark up the revision(s) that you would ask your child to do to improve this paragraph (you can mark up the paragraph itself if you want).
2. Write down the process you would use to assist your child in improving this paragraph. Please indicate the importance of each step, or show the order that you would do these steps.

In this paragraph I'm going to talk about playing Hacky Sack. I really like to play hack sack on Spring afternoons. Hacky sack is good for your legs, I lost ten pounds playing last spring. Hacky sack is also inexpensive and easy to play. You can play alone or with alot of people, you can take it whith you if I go fishing or the library to study. And its cool. If you'd like to play hacky sack you can call all you're freinds, go buy a hackey sack and put on your shorts. Expect to have a good time and not spend to much.

Writing Rubric

Element	Characteristics	Description of a superior writing product
Thought	Central idea, thesis statement, originality, point of view	Examines a topic with insight, usually from a fresh point of view; intellectual clichés are not discernible. Topic "fits" the length of the paper (not too general; not too trivial). Writing substantially and coherently responds to a topic with a developed thesis. Considers audience and purpose.
Development	Ideas, depth, support, detail, examples, alternatives, arguments, illustrations	General statements supported, developed, and illustrated by relevant detail. Opposing arguments are addressed. Use of concrete to support abstractions.
Organization	Introduction, body, conclusion; logical or perceivable order, purpose	Reflects a sense of purpose in organization. Order of paragraphs and sentences natural and satisfying. May evoke dramatic effect.
Coherence	Order, unity, transitions, flow, key words, parallel structure,	Writing holds together. Paragraphs coherent, unified, and well-developed. Clear, effective transitions between paragraphs and sentences. All ideas support the thesis; no digressions. . Avoid shifts in point of view, agreement, tense, mood. Understandable on the first read.
Sentences	Paragraph and sentence structure, topic sentences, syntax, subordination	Paragraphs carefully constructed. Sentence structure reflects appropriate variety and syntactic maturity. Use of a variety of simple, compound, and complex sentences.
Diction	Word choice, style, originality, voice	Word usage mature and appropriate to audience, subject, and purpose. Attention to levels of formality. Words creatively combined and free of clichés, triteness, and jargon. Dominant use of active voice.
Mechanics	Grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, stylesheets	Follows conventions of standard written English in grammar, usage inflection, agreement, punctuation, spelling, abbreviations, and capitalization. Free or nearly free from errors. May deviate from standard English if appropriate to the audience, purpose, and subject. If indicated, conforms to professional style guidelines (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago)

The Standard Five-Paragraph Essay

In preparation for college, a student who masters the five-paragraph essay should be able to transition quickly to more sophisticated academic writing that can result in good grades. Also, a quality five-paragraph essay can be a touchstone for writing to a one-hour essay exam question.

- I. Introductory paragraph
 - a. Attention getter. Some way of focusing attention on the topic may be used. A witty story, an illustration of an injustice, or some narrative that the reader can relate to are possibilities. This should be brief.
 - b. Thesis sentence. A single sentence that states the subject and purpose of the essay. An audience and conclusion is usually implied. Every sentence / idea in the essay conforms to and supports this statement.
 - c. Summary of the main points. Usually, the three main points--the topics for each of the three body paragraphs--are briefly stated.
 - d. Conclusion. A statement that foreshadows or summarizes the conclusion often ends the introductory paragraph.

- II. Body Paragraph 1
 - a. Topic sentence. States the topic of this paragraph. This sentence directly supports the thesis sentence.
 - b. Examples, illustrations, arguments. The idea presented in the topic sentence is supported here by concrete examples, illustrations, or arguments, depending on the purpose of the essay. Usually, at least two or three are needed.
 - c. Paragraph conclusion. Some way of tying the examples together or showing how the supporting details tie in to the thesis statement is provided.

- III. Body Paragraph 2
 - a. Transition. Some way of showing how the next point is different from the previous point helps to ensure a smooth flow of ideas.
 - b. Topic sentence. States the topic of this paragraph. This sentence directly supports the thesis sentence.

- c. Examples, illustrations, arguments. The idea presented in the topic sentence is supported here by concrete examples, illustrations, or arguments, depending on the purpose of the essay. Usually, at least two or three are needed.
- d. Paragraph conclusion. Some way of tying the examples together or showing how the supporting details tie in to the thesis statement is provided

IV. Body Paragraph 3

- a. Transition. Some way of showing how the next point is different from the previous point helps to ensure a smooth flow of ideas.
- b. Topic sentence. States the topic of this paragraph. This sentence directly supports the thesis sentence.
- c. Examples, illustrations, arguments. The idea presented in the topic sentence is supported here by concrete examples, illustrations, or arguments, depending on the purpose of the essay. Usually, at least two or three are needed.
- d. Paragraph conclusion. Some way of tying the examples together or showing how the supporting details tie in to the thesis statement is provided

V. Conclusion

- a. Transition. Some way of indicating that this paragraph is going to tie all the ideas together helps to improve the flow of ideas. A reiteration of an idea presented in the introduction can be effective. Avoid cliché transitions, such as "in conclusion" or "to summarize."
- b. Three main points. A reiteration or restatement of the three points developed in the body paragraphs reminds the reader of what was discussed. The relationship between these ideas may be clarified.
- c. Restatement of the thesis. When the thesis statement is restated in the conclusion, it is usually done in a way that shows how the three main points logically and naturally lead to this conclusion.
- d. Concluding statement. Some way of bringing the essay to a close allows the reader to feel that the essay is complete. Sometimes a final example is described or a witty twist that naturally arises from the conclusion is interjected.

Helpful References

American Heritage Dictionary. <http://www.bartleby.com/61/>

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Fowler, H. W. 1965. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*. Second ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

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