

# How to Write an Essay

Grades 7-12

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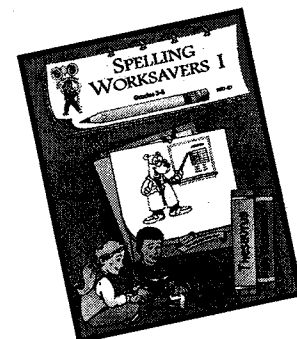
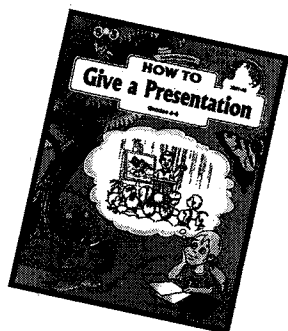
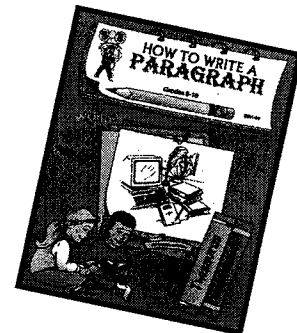
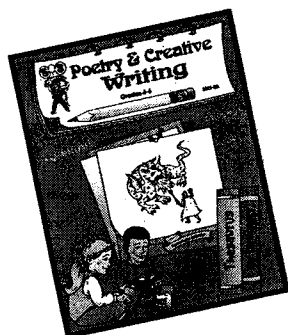
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**This resource is designed to prepare and help students write essays in the first years of secondary school. It will be helpful for students at higher levels of education who have had difficulty with essay-writing in earlier years.**

**Because it teaches a basic formula approach to essay-writing, it is designed as a starting point only. If students expect to excel at essay-writing at the university level, they need to build on basics which are presented here. However, students who have never experienced success at writing essays will benefit from studying this resource.**

**Much of this resource is written from a students perspective, so that teachers may give students the pages which they need or so that students can purchase the book to use as they write their essays at home.**



# Writing the First Draft

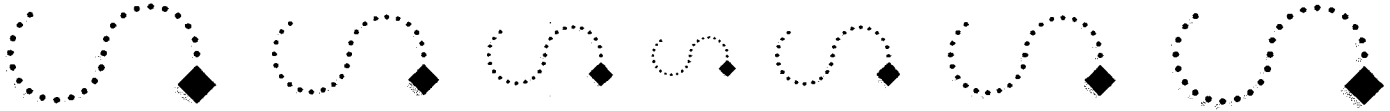
Most students who have difficulty writing essays need to work on content and organization; style will come later; and mechanics can be helped by proofreading, editing or using one of the many computer programs. The steps in the Prewriting stage will help to provide adequate content for the essay. What follows is a simple pattern which should help the student organize the essay. When the student is thoroughly familiar with the pattern, this formula can then be changed to meet the individual student's needs.

## 1. THE THESIS PARAGRAPH:

- **Step 1:** Begin with a sentence which catches the reader's interest. This sentence should not be the proposition for the essay, but should be somewhat related to the topic. The idea of the opening sentence may be developed or explained in several sentences which follow it.
- **Step 2:** In a literary essay it is necessary to state the title and author of the work on which the essay is based (e.g. William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar). This statement may be included in the same sentence which states the proposition (see step 3). Of course, in a non-literary essay this step would be omitted.
- **Step 3:** State the proposition in a single sentence. Do not explain the proposition at this point unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. The proposition can be explained as the issues are developed later in the essay.
- **Step 4:** State each issue in a separate sentence for each. If the issues are simple, they may be combined into a single sentence. However, a separate sentence for each one emphasizes the importance of each issue.
- **Step 5:** Conclude the paragraph by restating the proposition.

Following this pattern ensures that the arguments are clear to the reader or evaluator of the essay. By the end of the first paragraph, the reader knows what will be argued (the proposition) and how this argument will be developed (the issues).

A sample thesis paragraph appears on page 21.



## WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT (Continued)

### 2. TRANSITIONS:

Simply following the pattern on page 19 will result in a thesis paragraph which is choppy without any coherent flow. **Coherence** is a logical flow of ideas and relies on connective words and phrases to create this flow. These connective words and phrases are called **transitions**.

Transitions are used in the thesis paragraph mainly to connect issues. Beginning with the second issue, transitional words and phrases create coherence. They are also used to connect paragraphs in the body of the essay, beginning with the second issue, much as they are used in the thesis paragraph.

The most obvious transition words list issues in the order in which they will appear in the essay. These are “number” words, such as:

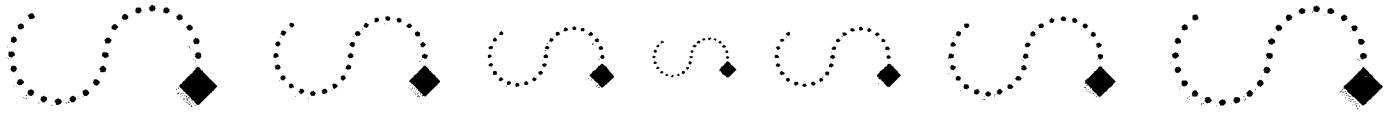
- first
- secondly
- thirdly, etc..

As stated, these transitions are obvious and would be avoided by more experienced writers.

Better transitions are words and phrases such as the following:

- |                     |                                 |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| • in addition       | } These transitions are used    |
| • similarly         | } to connect issues which are   |
| • also              | } similar arguments.            |
| • likewise          | }                               |
| • on the other hand | > These transitions are used    |
| • on the contrary   | > to connect opposite ideas.    |
| • however           | >                               |
| • therefore         | } These transitions are useful  |
| • thus, etc.        | } before a concluding sentence. |

Transitions which begin paragraphs will sometimes repeat the idea of the preceding paragraph as the writer leads into the next major idea.



## **WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT (Continued)**

### **3. A SAMPLE THESIS PARAGRAPH:**

What follows is a thesis paragraph based on the proposition that “Women are superior to men.” Note that it follows all the steps in the pattern on page 19.

<b>Statement to catch the reader’s interest</b>	From the time when Eve first handed Adam the apple, women have had the controlling hand in
<b>Statement of proposition</b>	the male-female relationship. In fact, women
<b>Statement of each issue, beginning with transitions</b>	are superior to men. First of all, women are more intelligent than men. Similarly, women are physically stronger than men. In addition, women are emotionally more stable than men.
<b>Summation restating the proposition</b>	Finally, women are more socially adaptable than men. Thus, it is clear that women are superior to men.

This is a very simple thesis paragraph, designed to show the pattern. Note that it is very repetitive, particularly in the repetition of the words “women” and “men”. It might be advisable for the writer to find synonyms for these words. On the other hand, the thesis is stated very strongly through all of this repetition; the writer’s thesis is absolutely clear to the reader.