

# **Student Success Guide**

## **Writing Skills**

Robert Todd Carroll

## Student Success Guide – Writing Skills

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Other books by Robert T. Carroll

- *The Common-Sense Philosophy of Religion of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, 1635-1699.* (1975). (International Archives of the History of Ideas / archives internationales d'histoire des idées). Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague
- *Student Success Guide: Study Skills* (1990). [www.skeptdic.com/refuge/studyskills1.pdf](http://www.skeptdic.com/refuge/studyskills1.pdf)
- *The Skeptic's Dictionary: A Collection of Strange Beliefs, Amusing Deceptions, and Dangerous Delusions.* (2003). Wiley and Sons.
- *Becoming a Critical Thinker – A Guide for the New Millennium.* (2005). 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Pearson Custom Publishing.

## Preface

The *Student Success Guide: Writing Skills* is a companion to the *Student Success Guide: Study Skills* book. The purpose of each is to provide a systematic approach to learning the skills needed by every successful student. The study skills text focuses on vocabulary building, time management, listening and concentration, reading and studying textbooks, taking notes, reviewing and preparing for tests. The writing skills text focuses on building those skills needed by the college student to fulfill typical writing assignments.

The *Student Success Guides* may be used independently by the student who wishes to improve his or her chances of success in humanities and social science courses. The books could also be used as the sole text in a College Success course or as an adjunct text in an English or Humanities course.

The driving idea behind the *Student Success Guides* is that methodical and purposive studying is the most effective and efficient. I don't claim that my methods are the only ones. In fact, I can't even call them **my** methods, since I have taken the work and suggestions of many people and applied them as I saw fit.

To do well in college the student does not have to be an excellent writer, but a certain competence is expected and is essential. This text is designed to help the student develop sufficient writing competency to produce papers and exams acceptable in any college level course.

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**Acknowledgment and dedication.** For the first half of my teaching career at Sacramento City College I was fortunate to have had Les Read as my colleague in the philosophy department. Les was one of my closest friends until his sudden death at age 48. Ed Stupka—who taught college success classes—Les, and I spent many fruitful hours discussing, arguing, and evaluating various teaching techniques and ideas. Without their insights and criticisms, this guide would not have been written.

The Los Rios Community College Board of Trustees granted me a sabbatical leave in the spring of 1986 to complete this project.

# STUDENT SUCCESS GUIDE: WRITING SKILLS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION



Without a doubt, the most important invention in human history is writing. It provides a relatively permanent record of information, opinions, beliefs, feelings, arguments, explanations, theories, etc. Writing allows us to share our communication not only with our contemporaries, but also with future generations. It permits people from the near and far-distant past to speak to us. Why then, given all of the beauty and benefits of writing, do so many students hate it?

Part of the distaste for writing must be accounted for by the associations students make with it. Writing is often taught in such a way that student failures, rather than successes, are focused on. The writing process is learned, by and large, in an environment of constant criticism and repeated failure. Creative use of language, inventive thinking, and critical reasoning often evoke not praise but hostility. Some teachers even use writing as a form of punishment. In addition, many students remember their earliest writing experiences as involving dull or irrelevant topics (similar to their first reading experiences).

Furthermore, many students were never required to learn proper spelling or grammar. These poor students come to think that "English" and "writing" are nothing but spelling and grammar. To them, writing means inevitable failure. Good writing is something they believe they will never be able to achieve, because they not only identify good writing with proper spelling and grammar, but they are governed by the self-serving and false notion

that they can't learn how to spell correctly or how to construct grammatically correct sentences.

However, good writing is not equivalent to good spelling and grammar. In fact, there will be no advice or instruction in those areas here. This text presupposes that the student knows both that correct spelling is expected and how to find the correct spelling of any word. It also presupposes that knowledge of a language's grammar and correct word usage are necessary conditions for good writing in that language. In short, this text assumes that the student knows:

- (1) how to properly construct a sentence,
- (2) that subjects and verbs must agree in number (singular subjects require singular verbs, plural subjects require plural verbs),
- (3) that the reference of pronouns should not be ambiguous,
- (4) that there should be consistency of person and tense in writing (no shifts from first to third person writing or from present tense to past tense writing, unless there is a very good reason to do so), and
- (5) that correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization and word usage are required.

. . .

## **WRITING - BASIC CHECKLIST**

*Before turning in a writing assignment, go through this basic checklist.*

- 1. Is every sentence complete, not a fragment?**
- 2. Do the subject and predicate agree in number in each sentence?**
- 3. Is every word spelled correctly?**
- 4. Are sentences punctuated correctly?**
- 5. Are words capitalized properly?**
- 6. Does each pronoun unambiguously refer to its antecedent?**
- 7. Do you stay in the same tense and person throughout?**
- 8. Are all words used correctly?**

## EXERCISE 1. CHECKING THE BASICS

Use the WRITING - BASIC CHECKLIST to check the following essay. Correct any errors. Check your corrections against the corrected version printed in the ANSWERS TO EXERCISES, pages 38-39.

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Throughout history the question of capital punishment has been a cause of much controversy. I believe that capital punishment is not morally justifiable on the grounds that it is immoral to kill a human being. And, the affect of killing criminals is too encourage violence.

Those in favor of capital punishment claim that it is a deterrent to crime. They also logically claim that it help to alleviate the over-crowded situation in most federal and state institutions. Another often heard defense is that executing criminals could of saved the taxpayers many dollars that could of been spent on food, shelter and clothing during a lifetime sentence.

There has actually been little to substantiate the deterrent theory because few criminals consider getting caught when planning an illegal action. The theory is, for the most part, archaic and irrelevant to the question of capital punishment. It is, in fact, another question in it's self.

While it is true that are penal institution our over-crowded, this is not a reason to kill people. If this logic is excepted, it would be permissible to kill three quarters of New York city. Crowded conditions and criminal punishment should not be confused with each other. They're separate problems whose existance indicates that there is too much confusion.

As to the third claim, that much money would be saved, I ask you to value the worth of a dead man. While it is true that the criminal who has been executed will no longer commit crimes; a person who is helped to become a useful citizen can become quite viable.

It is true, that there may be incorrigible people, who many people will think should be killed: but that person has the same right as everyone else. He need, perhaps, more help than others--but I do not believe that its really a sound reason to kill him--or having him killed. The hole of society is effected in a bad way when we start killing in the name of law and order. The countries attitude better start changing or we'll all be in a mess.

If it is wrong to kill one man, its twice as wrong to kill two.

. . .

## 2. ELEMENTS OF SATISFACTORY WRITING



o one likes to be reminded of their shortcomings or failures. Constant criticism isn't good for the ego or self-confidence. Checking your writing for

correct sentence structure, mechanics, word usage, spelling, punctuation and capitalization--and making the needed corrections--will reduce the amount of adverse criticism you'll receive on your writing assignments. Every writing assignment done at home ought to be nearly error-free.

Writing in class, without the benefit of surplus time, dictionaries, writing texts, and the like poses special problems for some students. Some teachers allow students to use dictionaries during exams. If your teacher allows this, make sure you bring your dictionary to school on the day of the test. (It is a good idea to carry a small dictionary with you while at school.)

If, however, you are unable to write basically proper and correct in-class assignments, then you should not enroll in a course which requires a significant amount of in-class writing. You will need to work on your basic writing skills before you attempt such a course. (Most likely, you will need to enroll in a developmental writing course.)

Assuming that you are able to write basically proper and correct in-class assignments, there are still three elements you should check before turning in any written assignment: **CLARITY, COHERENCE and FOCUS.**

**Most student writing failures in mainstream (i.e., non-developmental) courses are due to lack of clarity, coherence and/or focus.**

You do not need to become an excellent writer in order to do well on writing assignments in your non-English courses. But you must be able to write well enough to communicate to your teachers that you understand your assignments and have learned the material. However, you can't demonstrate what you know if you can't focus on a subject and write clearly and coherently about it.

### 2.1 CLARITY

**Insufficient clarity may be due to vagueness, ambiguity or obscurity.**

Vagueness is usually a matter of using a word or expression whose meaning is not precise or definite enough. Referring to a philosophical argument as 'stupid', without explaining in what way the argument fails, would be an example of vague writing. Often, qualitative terms are vague. For example, we all want to get rid of '*incompetent*' teachers, but just what is meant by 'incompetent teacher'? Or, we want to get rid of the '*fat*' in government, but just what is meant by 'fat'?

Often, too, quantitative expressions regarding amounts, dates, times, etc. are vague, e.g., '*not very much* money will be needed to build a new national defense system'. (Just how much is 'not very much'?) Often, a good example or illustration will reduce or eliminate vagueness. With **quantitative** terms, however, the best way to reduce or eliminate vagueness is to substitute the vague expression with one which is more precise. With qualitative terms it will usually be necessary to provide a **precising definition**, i.e., a list of conditions which an item must fulfill to have the term correctly applied to it.

**Ambiguity occurs when a word or**



**expression is used in such a way that it can be understood in more than one way.**

Ambiguity is usually a matter of carelessness and often involves using a pronoun whose referent is unclear. For example, "Laws involve commands, duties and sanctions. They are interrelated." It is not clear what 'they' refers to. Often, the only way to eliminate pronoun reference ambiguity is to not use the pronoun. E.g. "Laws involve the interrelated concepts of commands, duties and sanctions" (rather than the two sentences used in the previous example).

Sometimes it is not what a word refers to that is unclear, but what *sense* the word has in a particular context. For example, if a sign by a lake said **FINE FOR FISHING** would it mean that the fishing is good or that it is lawful to fish or that it is not lawful to fish? Usually the context makes it clear what sense of a word is intended. If it doesn't, then the ambiguous expression ought to be exchanged for one that is clear. (E.g., "\$20 Fine for Fishing" or "Lawful to Fish Here" or "Excellent Fishing Here", depending on what meaning is intended by the ambiguous expression.)

**Sometimes the grammatical structure of a sentence makes it ambiguous.** When this is the case, the writer often ends up saying one thing but meaning another. For example,

"Walking down the street, her house seemed to get bigger." (The house is walking, according to this sentence. It should read something like "As she walked down the street, her house appeared to get bigger." What if she had written, "As she walked down the street, it seemed to get bigger"? How would you correct that sentence?) The only way to eliminate grammatical ambiguity is to correct the grammatical structure of the sentence so that it is clear what you mean to say and you say what you mean.

**Obscurity in student writing is usually due to incorrect word usage or convoluted sentence structure.** The former can be reduced by only using words you know the meaning of. The latter can often be reduced by simply reducing the length of a sentence. Often, however, obscure writing is due to lack of clear connection between ideas, such as between a general claim and its application. In such cases, a good example or illustration can clarify matters substantially. For example, "Good reasoning should be clear. That is, there should be no doubt as to what your point is and what your supports for that point are."

. . .

## EXERCISE 2 - CLARITY IN WRITING (Answers on pages 39-40.)

For each of the following paragraphs: a. Circle any vague or ambiguous expressions. (Suggest ways to clarify or rewrite the material so that it is clearer.)

b. Mark obscure sentences or passages with a marginal, vertical line next to the obscurity. (Try to rewrite the passage in clear English.)

c. Indicate places where examples or illustrations are needed.

1. I had a terrible time driving last week. On Monday, coming home I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have. On Tuesday, a pedestrian hit me and went under my car. The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him. On Wednesday, as I approached the intersection, a stop sign suddenly appeared in a place where no stop sign had ever appeared before. So, when I saw that I couldn't avoid the collision, I stepped on the gas and crashed into another car. But the worst was yet to come. On Thursday, an invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my vehicle and vanished!

2. Walking in the rain, the house got dimmer and dimmer. I saw Mary and asked her how her mother was. Mary hated her mother. She was very cruel. She told me that Carol and her mother did not see eye to eye on her friendship with Jonathan. She's a sociologist who makes her living by showing the degrading effects of poverty and ignorance. She once had severe pains when she laid on her side for over a year.

3. Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

4. Today there was an event at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania. There was some slight energetic disassembly and rapid oxidation. We consider these events, however, to be normal aberrations. There was some infiltration as plutonium took up residence in a restricted area. Those communities with similar nuclear reactors need not worry as this event is clearly within an acceptable flat band of risk.

5. We must not allow police brutality. Too much violence by a policeman should lead to automatic suspension from the force while the incident is being investigated. Excessive brutality should not be tolerated in a free society. Liberty and police terrorism do not mix well in a democracy. Let's stop this brutality now, before it is too late.

6. Generally speaking, abortion should not be allowed. But there are some situations where it should be up to the woman and her physician, not the state or the community. These situations should be clear to everyone with even half a brain, so I won't go into any detail.

7. In respect to abortion, this phenomenon exists with relation to the premise that the unborn person is in fact a person in every sense of the word, due all rights which accompany the state of personhood. Most importantly, the fetus is due its right to life. I shall assume that everyone is well aware that argumentation on this particular premise is still being conducted and no true conclusion is realistically foreseen upcoming in the near future. Nonetheless, such is the foundation of much anti-abortion argumentation, and since no clear conclusion appears to be forthcoming, I shall for the breath of the paper accept the premise that the fetus is a person and examine the development of the argument from there.

8. The first amendment to the federal constitution states that "Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This amendment requires the separation of church and state, and since public schools are run by the government at some level, religious activity in public schools has been closely watched.

## 2.2 COHERENT AND FOCUSED WRITING

**Coherent writing has clear connections between ideas, between sentences, and between paragraphs.** Focused writing has a clear purpose and a clear topic. Connections establish relations and make transitions. [See my **Student Success Guide - Part I, Study Skills**, especially the material on transitional expressions, relations, and the language of questions, viz., sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.] **Focus establishes what you are writing about and why. Without focus, writing cannot be coherent.**

Many students confuse **writing about an issue** with focusing. They are not identical. **FOCUSED WRITING ESTABLISHES IN THE BEGINNING PARAGRAPH A PRECISE TOPIC AND PURPOSE.** The remaining paragraphs must then be related to the established topic and purpose. An essay on the harmful effects of pornography, for

example, would not necessarily be focused simply because every sentence in the essay had something to do with pornography. To be focused, the sentences would have to be relevant to the purpose of the essay.

**Student writing often fails because it does not have a clear focus or purpose.** It rambles or wanders from point to point, without any clear direction. It is, in short, incoherent. Much adverse criticism on written assignments can be avoided by learning to write coherently. The first step is to learn how to focus your writing. For this, we will return to some slightly modified material on focused reading which was introduced in the **Student Success Guide - Study Skills** book. **Coherent essay writing has four parts: title, introduction, main body, and conclusion.** These parts must be clearly related to each other, as indicated by the following outline of the structure of a well-formed essay.

### STRUCTURE OF AN ESSAY

- I. Title
- II. Introduction (to the essay)
- III. Body (of the essay)
  - A. Paragraph
    - a. Main or subsidiary point
    - b. Support for main or subsidiary point
      - i. Background material
      - ii. Illustrations or examples
      - iii. Reasons
        - aa. Suggesting purposes
        - bb. Supporting conclusions
        - cc. Giving explanations
    - c. Transitions
  - B. Paragraph
    - . . . .(same as above, III.A). . . .
- IV. Conclusion (of essay)

## 2.2.1 TITLES

**The title of an essay should reveal its topic.** Since a title should be short, it usually should not reveal in detail what the writer plans to do with that topic. Titles of student essays often reveal the presence or lack of focus. Generally speaking, the more specific a title is, the more focused the writing tends to be.

Below are four lists of titles, each descending from more general titles to more specific ones. Note how the more specific the title is, the clearer the idea is as to what the essay will focus on.

### EXAMPLES OF ESSAY TITLES

- I. Greece
  - Greek Tragedy
  - Sophocles and Tragedy
  - "Antigone"
  - The Concept of Duty in "Antigone"
  - Would Antigone Have Been a Draftdodger?
  
- II. God
  - The Existence of God
  - Proofs for the Existence of God
  - The Impossibility of Proving God Exists
  
- III. Greece and Egypt
  - Religion and Art in Greece and Egypt
  - The Social and Political Function of Religious Art in Ancient Greece and Egypt
  
- IV. Abortion
  - Arguments for and against Abortion
  - Reason and Emotion in Abortion-Arguments
  - Reasonable Arguments in the Abortion Controversy

## 2.2.2 INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPHS

**Titles and introductory paragraphs should be closely related.** The introductory paragraph must contain an opening statement and a thesis statement. The opening paragraph should establish a context; it should let the reader know what the topic is in more detail than the title. It should inform the reader of the writer's intentions: what are you going to try to do in the paper? Good writers use

the introduction to stimulate interest in the essay by indicating some interesting fact about the topic's history or by noting its significance or value.

Below you will find examples of introductory paragraphs for each of the most specific titles from the list of example titles given above.

Note that each example lets the reader know the thesis and purpose of the essay.

### Example 1 Would Antigone Have Been a Draftdodger?

"Antigone" has significance for the modern reader even though it was written two thousand years ago. The question of what one should do when duty to the state conflicts with moral duty must still be asked. Antigone's dilemma is the same that faced many young men during the Vietnam War. To understand her behavior in Sophocles' masterpiece, we must understand her concept of duty. Perhaps by understanding Antigone's values and actions, we will be able to better understand the draft resisters of our own country. For, many of them seemed to share Antigone's idea of a moral duty to obey a 'higher law' which conflicts with the law of the state.

### Example 2 The Impossibility of Proving God Exists

Whether or not the existence of God can be proven by rational arguments has been debated for centuries. Despite the many arguments for God's existence, such as Anselm's famous ontological argument or St. Thomas's five proofs, I will show that it is impossible to prove the existence of God.

**Example 3**  
**The Social and Political Function of Religious Art  
in Ancient Greece and Egypt**

Religion and art were very closely connected in both ancient Greece and Egypt. But in Greece the arts affirmed human freedom and dignity, while in Egypt the arts primarily affirmed the power of the pharaoh. Greek art reflects a humane, non-dogmatic view of the gods, whereas Egyptian art reflects rigidity and stiffness. The history of Greek art shows us a dynamic, changing society. The history of Egyptian art shows us a static, unchanging society. To understand these differences in art and their relationship to differences in the social and political structure of the two societies, it is essential to understand the differences between the religious beliefs which gave rise to them.

**Example 4**  
**Reasonable Arguments in the Abortion Controversy**

Abortion is a topic likely to raise more violent emotions than reasoned arguments. Nevertheless, there are some reasonable voices in this emotional wilderness, and it is their arguments on abortion I will present and analyze. A minimum condition for being a 'reasonable voice' is not to expect others to accept on faith statements that are unprovable. Thus, any argument that would try to enforce by law a proposition that is unprovable is necessarily unreasonable, in my view. Statements such as "God infuses a soul into every union of human gametes at the moment a zygote is formed" are unprovable. It may not be unreasonable to believe such a claim in the context of one's religious faith, but it is unreasonable to require others to share your faith. In this essay, I will explain why such a demand is unreasonable, as I attempt to demonstrate what constitutes a reasonable argument on the topic of abortion.

The example titles and introductions share the common quality of being well-focused. They indicate a writer who knows what she is about, and why. Each title is clear and specific. Each introductory paragraph has a clear opening and thesis statement. Some of the example titles and paragraphs are more interesting than others, but the main thing is that each does what it is supposed to do.

### EXERCISE 3 - CHECKING TITLES AND INTRODUCTIONS

Read each of the following titles and introductory paragraphs. Write a short evaluation of each paragraph. Do the titles and introductions clearly state the purpose and focus of the essay? (Answers on pages 40-41.)

1. Prayer in School

"Why can't freedom to acknowledge God be enjoyed again by children in every schoolroom across this land?" This question was asked by President Reagan in his State of the Union message.

. . .

2. The Death Penalty: Right or Wrong?

The Death Penalty has always been a controversial issue. I will try my best to present both sides on equal terms.

. . .

3. The Morality of Abortion

When speaking of abortion it is at once a moral, medical, legal, sociological, demographic, religious and psychological issue, amazingly complex and not easily amendable to one-dimensional thinking. Every person who considers the permissibility of abortion will no doubt view the issue with varying perspectives. When an issue becomes so overwhelmingly complex an individual tends to associate an individual premise of the issue with the issue as a whole. This is a defensive mechanism which makes the issue easier to deal with.

. . .

4. Flat Rate Taxes

Once scoffed at as an idealistic fool's dream, the modified flat rate income tax is now gaining serious supporters. This is not surprising when the merits of the flat tax are compared to the complexities and apparent inequities of the current progressive income tax. However, if you look a little deeper it can be seen that the flat tax is, at best, a step in the right direction.

. . .

5. Bilingual Education: Shattering the Linguistic Barrier

Children learn better when taught in their native tongue. Children learn better when cultural disparities are concurrently addressed. Children need careful and conscientious training in learning, understanding and speaking English as a second language before learning to read and write it. Meanwhile, children need their curriculum taught in their first language so that their conceptual development does not suffer. Therefore, bilingual/bicultural instruction in our schools is an educational asset that should be properly exercised to ensure the most advantageous learning possible.

. . .

6. Handgun Control

During the last decade we have experienced the greatest increase of crime in our history. Each year more than 170,000 people are killed by a handgun. [1] Sales of handguns in California rose 3 percent over last year and are expected to reach 5 million sales by the year 1987.[2] Something must be done to stop the violence in our country.

. . .

7. Argument Favoring Mandatory Seat Belt Legislation

The United States has one of the lowest vehicular fatality rates, per miles driven, in the world. Deaths per 100 million miles have steadily declined from 11.2 in 1945 to 3.1 in 1977. Despite this seemingly admirable claim, 45,000 persons died on U.S. freeways in 1982 as a result of vehicular trauma. The problem of road related trauma accounts for more than 90 per cent of all transport fatalities and is the fourth leading public health problem in the United States. For young adults, ranging in age from 15 to 24, this is the leading cause of death. With the number of fatalities the United States is now experiencing, it would be relatively easy to acquire the necessary number of names to fill a memorial wall similar to that of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

. . .

8. The Right to Die

It has been estimated that the medical advances of the last 10 years exceed all medical progress of the preceding 100 years. Today, countless doctors are able to perform life-saving miracles on their patients. However, this new technology has also confronted us with a dilemma we never had to consider before.

. . .



9. The Immorality of Capital Punishment for Murderers

Some proponents of capital punishment justify the death penalty on the ground that it not only deters an executed murderer from committing any more murders, but also deters others from committing murders, too. The first claim is certainly true: dead men can't commit murders. And the second part may very well be true to some extent, though how significant the deterrent effect of the death penalty is remains uncertain. Even so, the central issue regarding the justification of the death penalty is not the significance of its deterrent effect. The main issue is a moral one, and deterrence is irrelevant to the moral justification of the death penalty. If premeditated killing by the state could be morally justified solely by its consequences, then theoretically there can be no limit to the kinds of actions that the state could justifiably punish by death. The death penalty cannot be morally justified by its consequences. If the premeditated killing of a convicted criminal by the state can be justified, it will have to be on the grounds that the criminal deserves such a punishment because of the nature of his crime. However, I will demonstrate that there is no crime that deserves death, and thus that capital punishment is immoral.

. . .

2.2.3 BODY PARAGRAPHS

**A satisfactory introduction informs the reader of the topic and purpose of the essay.**

The body of the essay should consist of main points and their support. The body paragraphs should fulfill the promise of the introduction.

Refer to section 2.2.2, above. In EXAMPLE 1 (page 9)--"Would Antigone Have Been a Draftdodger?"--the body paragraphs should explain Antigone's concept of duty and apply it to draft resistors during the Vietnam war. In EXAMPLE 2 (page 9)--"The Impossibility of Proving God Exists"--the body paragraphs should show how the standard arguments for the existence of God fail and explain why all such arguments must fail. In EXAMPLE 3 (page 10)--"The Social and Political Function of Religious Art in Ancient Greece and Egypt"--the body paragraphs should explain the main differences in religious beliefs between the ancient Egyptians and Greeks and show how those

religious differences were expressed in art. It should also

demonstrate a connection between the different arts and the different social and political institutions in the two societies. In EXAMPLE 4 (page 10)--"Reasonable Arguments in the Abortion Controversy"--the body paragraphs should explain why it is unreasonable to expect others to accept unprovable statements which you take on faith. It should also establish criteria for what constitutes a reasonable argument. Finally, it should present and analyze some reasonable arguments on abortion.

. . .

**The support for main or subsidiary points should consist of**

- A. BACKGROUND MATERIAL and/or
- B. ILLUSTRATIONS, EXAMPLES, QUOTATIONS and/or
- C. REASONS

**Background material should be given to support the understanding of the material.**

Its main function is to clarify the meaning, function or significance of the material. How much and what kind of background material ought to be presented depends upon the nature of the audience and the purpose of the writing. For example, a paper for an introductory philosophy course on Plato's argument regarding the difference between knowledge and opinion should not consist of several pages of biographical information. Such information would be unnecessary because it would not help the reader (your teacher) determine whether or not you understand Plato's argument. But, any concepts peculiar to ancient Greek society which bear upon understanding Plato's argument should be presented.

How much background information would be needed for essays on the topics in the examples above? For EXAMPLE 1 (page 9), enough information should be given so that the reader knows who Antigone is, what situation exists in the play that leads to her moral dilemma, and what she does in response to her situation. Biographical information on Sophocles, information on other plays by Sophocles, the origins of Greek drama, etc., are unnecessary.

For EXAMPLE 2 (page 9), very little, if any, background information need be given. Some information on the purpose of

arguments for God's existence might be given. Other background information might liven up the essay some, but it is doubtful that it would clarify the arguments to be presented.

For EXAMPLE 3 (page 10), background information should be spread throughout the essay as needed to clarify the specific works of art, and the religious, social and political practices and beliefs that are mentioned.

For EXAMPLE 4 (page 10), very little, if any background information is needed. Most people are aware of the abortion controversy and of the highly emotional nature of the public debate on the issue.

. . .

**Illustrations, examples and quotations are given not only to clarify points but to support general claims.** How many illustrations, examples or quotations should be given depends on the nature and purpose of the essay. An essay on a topic such as that in EXAMPLE 3 (page 10) should contain many examples of works of art from both Egypt and Greece. An essay on a topic such as that in EXAMPLE 1 (page 9) would not require many illustrations or examples. Several quotations should be given in EXAMPLES 2 and 4.

**Reasons will generally be statements of purpose, statements in support of conclusions, or explanatory statements.**

Statements of purpose are reasons why someone has done (or will do) something, including why the author has written what she did.

Reasons given to support conclusions are called premises; they are given to support the truth or reasonable certainty of their conclusions.

Reasons why some event happened or some action was taken are given to explain events or positions.

EXAMPLE 1 (page 9) would require an argument to justify Antigone's actions and an explanation of how her situation is like that of the draft resistor. EXAMPLE 2 (page 9) should present the kinds of reasons given in traditional arguments to support the conclusion that God exists. The author must also present her own reasons in support of her conclusion that it is impossible to prove God exists.

The author of the essay in EXAMPLE 3 (page 10) must support the several claims made in the opening paragraph regarding both the relationship of art to religion and the relationship of art and religion to the social and political structure of ancient Greek and Egyptian societies. The author of the essay in

EXAMPLE 4 (page 10) must provide the demonstration promised in the opening paragraph.

. . .

#### **EXERCISE 4 - CHECKING POINTS AND SUPPORT**

Read the following argumentative essay in support of mandatory seat belt legislation.

1. Is the main point of each paragraph clear? If it is, paraphrase it in a single sentence. If it is not, try to specify how it needs to be improved.
2. Indicate support statements with letters above them: M or S for Main or Subsidiary point, B for Background material, E for Example or Illustration and R for Reason.
3. If a support statement is a Reason, indicate in the margin next to it whether it states a purpose, premise or explanation. (Answers on pages 41-45.)

. . .

#### **Argument Favoring Mandatory Seat Belt Legislation**

The United States has one of the lowest vehicular fatality rates, per miles driven, in the world. Deaths per 100 million miles have steadily declined from 11.2 in 1945 to 3.1 in 1977. Despite this seemingly admirable claim, 45,000 persons died on U.S. freeways in 1982 as a result of vehicular trauma. The problem of road related trauma accounts for more than 90 per cent of all transport fatalities and is the fourth leading public health problem in the United States. For young adults, ranging in age from 15 to 24, this is the leading cause of death. With the number of fatalities the United States is now experiencing, it would be relatively easy to acquire the necessary number of names to fill a memorial wall similar to that of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

But there is still a larger problem that has to be dealt with after the dead are buried. The costs to society, in terms of medical and rehabilitation costs, insurance premiums, and lost productivity to employers far exceed the actual economic burdens imposed by deaths. This problem is due to the sheer number of non-fatal injuries, which is currently estimated at 4 million annually. For

instance, in medical cases where the costs to the patient or family amounted to at least \$100,000, 50 per cent had suffered brain and/or spinal cord damage. Road trauma produces more new paraplegics and quadriplegics each year in the United States than any other form of accident. It is also the leading cause of epilepsy. Additionally, on-the-job costs from road trauma directly and indirectly cost U.S. employers an average of approximately \$120,000 per victim as a result of medical insurance, workers compensation, unemployment taxes, lost workdays and administrative costs. The total annual price tag for automobile deaths and injuries is approaching 57 billion dollars! Yet, we could significantly reduce this cost by enacting mandatory seat belt legislation. Over 41 countries have enacted some form of seat belt legislation, and 21 of those foreign laws have been studied by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The focus of the evaluation was the history of the laws, implementation, specification of each law, compliance of seat belt usage and the overall effectiveness of each law with respect to reducing injuries and deaths. The study found that attitudes about seat belt use and laws did not correlate with observed behavior. Moreover, enforcement by police--which in most cases was limited to a small fine and non-selective enforcement--was significant in equating compliance and enactment of legislation. All countries saw an immediate 200-300 per cent increase in compliance upon enactment. Moreover, the average reduction in fatalities and injuries was from 15-30 per cent.

Of course, it is difficult to predict if the United States would experience similar success if mandatory seat belt legislation were to be enacted here. But, Canada--a country much like our own in many relevant respects--witnessed an increase in seat belt usage from 17 percent to 76.8 percent when they enacted their seat belt law. Also, after three years of living with the new law, Canadians have seen the automobile death and injury rate drop by 13 per cent, the number of hospitalized victims drop by 16 per cent, the cost of treatment drop by 10 per cent and the average cost of rehabilitation drop by 6.5 per cent. Some of these effects, though, can be attributed to the fact that speed limits were reduced during this same period.

Opponents to mandatory seat belt legislation argue that the state has no right to limit their liberty unless their behavior is harmful to others. The truth is that it is not only the person who does not wear a seat belt who is harmed when an accident occurs. The rest of us are harmed, too, by increasing our automobile and hospitalization insurance costs and by increasing our tax burden as we are forced to support more and more victims and their families with state monies. People who used to contribute to the economy and the community now become financial burdens to the community. The mandatory seat belt law is no more an unreasonable limitation of liberty than are traffic laws. Consequently, Congress or the states ought to enact mandatory seat belt legislation as soon as possible.

## 2.2.4 TRANSITIONS

While each paragraph has its own structure, it must be connected to the other paragraphs to give the whole body of the essay its coherence. To indicate a shift from

paragraph to paragraph, or a shift from a main point to a subsidiary one, or a shift from one supporting point to another supporting or contrasting point, writers use **transitional expressions**. These expressions not only mark shifts in ideas; they also **relate** ideas. They connect what comes before them with what

comes after them. Using transitional expressions will help you write coherently; for, it will help you focus on the relationships of the various parts of the essay you are writing.

Below, you will find a list of relations and transitional expressions used to establish them. In your own writing

1. Identify what relationship you want to establish between two ideas, then use an appropriate transitional expression to connect

the ideas.

2. Be careful not to link numerous ideas in a single sentence.

3. When beginning a new line of thought indicate this by starting a new paragraph.

## RELATIONSHIPS AND TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS

<u>RELATIONSHIP</u>	<u>TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION</u>
ADDITION	and, also, again, besides, moreover, too, furthermore, in addition, firstly,
SEQUENCE	next, then, first, last, second, finally, soon, since, shortly
COMPARISON	similarly, likewise, by comparison, in the same (or like) way (or manner)
CONTRAST	on the other hand, but, yet, nevertheless, still, however, on the contrary, in contrast, otherwise, despite
ILLUMINATION	for example, that is, in fact, for instance, specifically, particularly, to clarify
EXPLANATION, PROOF or ARGUMENT (premise)	for this reason, because, since, for, in order to, to this end
ARGUMENT (conclusion)	therefore, in conclusion, so, thus, consequently, as a result, it follows that

## EXERCISE 5 – CHECKING TRANSITIONS

Go through the essay of Exercise 4 and circle any transitional expressions. Where you think there should be a transitional expression but there is none, write ‘tr’. (Answers on p. 45.)

### 2.2.5 CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

The conclusion of an essay should explicitly tie together the several points made in the body of the essay to the thesis statement made in the introduction. A conclusion should summarize what an essay has attempted to do and what it has accomplished. You should not include your own evaluation of your work in your conclusion. Let the reader decide on the merits of your essay.

## EXERCISE 6 - CHECKING CONCLUSIONS

Read the following conclusions of essays. Do they seem to tie together several points or summarize what the essay tried to do or accomplish? In general terms, what is good or bad about these conclusions? (Without reading the entire essay your comments on a conclusion must be in very general terms.)

(Answers on pages 45-46.)

. . .

### Exercise 6 - Concluding Paragraphs

1. In all of the world, there is no place where freedom of religion is more prevalent than in the United States. The opportunity to worship is available any time. Organized voluntary prayer in the public schools is not necessary and it is undesirable. The certain adverse consequences of so-called voluntary prayer far outweigh the uncertain benefits. Children who do not join in the majority's religious activity will be made to feel persecuted for their religious beliefs. And, if centuries of praying in places of worship have not led to the development of good character and moral behavior, it boggles the mind to think that a few seconds of praying together in a profane place will suddenly cure all our moral ills.
2. However, I agree with his solution and despite some rather disturbing material, I found his argument to be much more sound and reasonable.
3. Throughout the breath of this paper, I have been granting that the fetus is a person as abortion opponents suggest. I have concentrated on questioning whether their conclusions, abortion is impermissible for varied reasons, follows their argument with necessity. I think it does not. I feel

that so long as a woman has not consciously given another person permission to use her body, the other person has no right to demand use or continued use of her body. I view a persons 'right to life' as no more than a statement that people should not be killed unjustly. In essence, I believe that a woman has every right to decide what happens in and to her own body in most cases. All the premises I've offered to support my opinion lead me to feel that given the correct motives, abortion may be considered morally permissible. [NOTE: Feel free to correct any basic writing errors in this paragraph.]

4. For these reasons and those stated earlier, changes toward a flat rate tax, despite the inequities and problems that may occur, is an improvement over the existing system.

5. In regarding the most advantageous learning environment for the non-English speaking child, evidence concerning bilingual/bicultural education clearly supports the implementation of such. A 1979 statement issued by the New York based Carnegie Corporation concluded that "regardless of the current debate, the fact remains that there are millions of children in the U.S. schools who speak little or no English. Since neither quick immersion nor ESL alone has worked well with children from low-income, non-English speaking backgrounds," reasoned Alan Pifer, foundation president, "teaching such youngsters in their first language while they are learning English would appear to be a sensible alternative."

6. Something must be done soon, before another 170,000 people are killed this year.

7. Because I feel my premises are sound and I have argued and analyzed the opposition, I feel I am justified in saying doctors should have a right to discontinue treatment to terminally ill patients.

## 2.2.6 WRITING ESSAYS - A CHECKLIST

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Before turning in an essay, go through the following checklist.

---



### 1. CLARITY

1.1 Is any expression ambiguous, too vague, or obscure?

1.2 Are definitions given where needed?

1.3 Is the thesis and purpose of the essay clear?

1.4 Are there examples, illustrations and quotations where needed?



## 2. COHERENCE

2.1 Is each sentence clearly related to those before and after it?

2.2 Is each paragraph clearly related to those before and after it?

2.3 Are appropriate transition words used to indicate how your sentences and paragraphs are related?

2.4 Do statements which need support have sufficient reasons, facts or details to back them up?



## 3. FOCUS

3.1 Do you state in the first paragraph your purpose and focus?

3.2 Does each sentence in a paragraph clearly relate to the other sentences in that paragraph?

3.3 Does each paragraph clearly relate to the other paragraphs?

3.4 Does your conclusion tie together your thesis and support?

### 2.3 A METHOD FOR WRITING ESSAYS



riting will be easier if it is systematic and methodical. There is no recipe for great writing, but there are several methods for writing

satisfactorily.

One of the more successful methods for beginning essay writers is known as the SLOWER method. The method introduced here is a variation on that method; it might be called the SLOOWER method. SLOOWER is an acronym for

Select a topic.

List your ideas.

Organize your ideas.

Outline your essay.

Write your first draft.

Edit your first draft.

Rewrite your essay.

**1. SELECTING THE TOPIC.** Before selecting a topic, consider how much time you have to write the essay. Select a topic you can fit easily into your schedule. Begin by drawing up a list of possible topics. When making up



your list, try to come up with *specific* topics rather than very general ones. But even very general topics are better than none at all. You can always narrow down your topic after you have listed your ideas and before you begin your outline.

Base your list on topics suggested by your teacher or discussed in class or the text book. Use the subject index of your text to give you some ideas. If necessary, go to the library and use the subject catalogue index to look up titles of books; one might provide you with a topic. While making your list of topics, do not evaluate them. Begin the selecting process only after you have several topics on your list.

When selecting a topic, consider what interests you and what your knowledge of the potential topics is. If possible, select a topic related to your experience and not too technical for you to handle. You do not want to do more research than is necessary. Research takes time.

If you have difficulty in selecting a topic from your list, use the process of elimination to arrive at your topic. Reject first the topic you least want to write about. Repeat this procedure until you are left with one topic.

**2. MAKE A LIST OF IDEAS.** Use your memory, notes, and study cards [See *Student Success Guide - Study Skills*, section 6.] to help you make up a list of ideas related to your topic. Your list should include anything you can think of that has anything at all to do with your topic. Don't be critical when making up the list. The point of this activity is to list ideas, not to select the ones you will include in your paper. That comes later.

An example of listing ideas is given on the following page. The topic selected is "Religious Art in Ancient Greece and Ancient Egypt." Look over the list before going on. (The list is copied in Exercise 7. Use the copy as you read the next section on organizing your ideas.)

. . .

## EXAMPLE LISTING OF IDEAS

### Religious Art in Ancient Greece and Ancient Egypt

religion	Horus	metopes
the Parthenon	tombs	stylized
moderation	paintings	stability
art	Athena	capitals
temple of Athena Nike	lightness	realism
ostentatious	vases	goddesses
Greece	animals	music
temple of Karnak	heaviness	idealism
individualism	Iliad	Sophocles
Egypt	fate	tragedies
pyramids	rigidity	power
wealth & luxury	architecture	suffering
temples	life after death	Oedipus Rex
columns/pillars	softness	restraint
poverty	philosophy	pharaoh
hardship	mass	hubris
sculptures	gods	order
pylons	friezes	democracy
statues	colossal size	autocracy
poems	change	freedom

**3. ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS.** The ideas on your list now must be organized into groups, so that you can make an outline for your essay. To do this, you will need some principles or rules according to which your ideas will be grouped. Sometimes a useful organizing principle will be obvious. For example, your topic may lead naturally to grouping your ideas into pros and cons, or contrasting views on the same subject, or benefits and drawbacks of a position or strengths and weaknesses of an argument. At other times, however, you will have to study your list carefully as you grope for ways to group your ideas.

It is best to begin by eliminating those terms which so general that they are likely to fit in almost any grouping you make. Any term which is in your title ought to be crossed off. Thus, on the example list, begin by crossing off 'religion', 'art', 'Greece' and 'Egypt'.

You can begin grouping any item on your list, but it is usually a good idea to begin with some item whose relationship to other items on the list is clear to you. Circle that item and then go through the entire list, circling the same kind of items. On the example list a good starting point might be 'temples'. Look for kinds of temples and circle them, viz., 'the Parthenon,' the 'temple of Athena Nike,' and the 'temple of Karnak'.

Next, look for an item which is more general than the item you started with. Discover this by asking 'what kind of thing is it?' For example, what kind of thing is a temple? It is a religious building. Since

Several of the remaining items in the example list may be grouped under the heading of themes in Greek tragedies and epic poetry, viz., 'hubris,' 'fate,' 'life after death' and 'suffering'. Triangles might be used to group these items together with poems, 'the Iliad),' 'tragedies,' 'Sophocles,' and 'Oedipus Rex)'. [The item 'literature' might be added to the list of ideas. A triangle would then be put around it and the term 'philosophy' as well, since philosophy, epic poetry and tragedy are kinds of literature. Another option would be to cross off philosophy,

buildings are products of architecture, circle 'architecture.' Is there anything else on the list which is also a product of architecture? Yes, pyramids and tombs are both products of architecture. Circle both terms.

Finally, look for items which are more specific than the item you started with. In our example list, there are several items which are parts of temples, viz., friezes, metopes, capitals, columns/pillars, and pylons. Circle the terms representing these items.

Repeat the above procedure until most items on your list have been grouped. Use other figures (such as squares, brackets, diamonds, etc.) to indicate groupings. For example, several of the items on the example list refer to qualities of Greek art. These might be boxed, viz., 'realism,' 'idealism,' 'restraint,' 'order,' 'softness,' 'individualism,' 'moderation,' and 'lightness.' Several terms might be organized around the principle of qualities of Egyptian art: 'rigidity,' 'mass,' 'colossal size,' 'stylized,' 'power,' 'stability,' 'ostentatious,' and 'heaviness'. These terms might be bracketed.

Several items might be grouped according to the principle of characteristics of Greek society. For example, 'change,' 'democracy,' 'freedom,' 'poverty and hardship'. These might be indicated by wedges ('<' and '>'). Other items refer to characteristics of Egyptian life, viz., 'pharaoh,' 'autocracy,' 'rigidity,' 'wealth and luxury'. These terms might be indicated by asterisks. (Items which fall into more than one grouping, such as 'rigidity', should be marked off with more than one set of symbols, e.g., \*[rigidity]\*.)

indicating that it is not relevant to the thesis.]

Of the terms which now remain, 'Horus,' 'Athena,' 'gods' and 'goddesses' go together (Horus is an Egyptian god; Athena is a Greek goddess). (Slashes might be used to mark off these terms.) That leaves only 'paintings,' 'vases,' 'music,' 'animals,' 'sculptures' and 'statues'. Before considering what to do with these items, it should be noted that in most groupings of lists of ideas, there will be several items that seem to stand alone. Such items are either

(1) relevant, but very general (and hence everything] else on the list seems related to them), or

(2) relevant, but related to nothing else on the list (and hence the list ought to be expanded to include other related items), or

(3) irrelevant (and hence items you should cross off your list).

The remaining items might be disposed of as follows:

Since painting was important in Egyptian religious art, the list ought to be expanded to include examples (such as tomb paintings, hieroglyphics and papyrus paintings). Greek vase painting would make up a contrasting group.

Since relatively little is known about either ancient Egyptian or Greek music, it would be best to omit this item from the list.

The term 'animals' might be grouped with 'gods' and 'goddesses', if the term 'metamorphosis' is added and grouped with them; for, both the ancient Egyptians and Greeks represented their gods as capable of taking on animal forms. This idea is reflected in their art as well.

Finally, the terms 'sculpture' and 'statue' are practically synonymous. Since sculpture was a very important religious art in both ancient Egypt and Greece, the list should be expanded to include several representative examples of Greek and Egyptian sculptures.

## EXERCISE 7: GROUPING IDEAS

Use the marks and symbols recommended above in section 3 to group the items in the list below.

religion		metopes
	tombs	
the Parthenon		stylized
	paintings	
moderation		stability
	Athena	
art		capitals
	lightness	
temple of Athena Nike		realism
	vases	
ostentatious		goddesses
	animals	
Greece		music
	heaviness	
temple of Karnak		idealism
	Iliad	
individualism		hubris
	fate	
Egypt		tragedies
	rigidity	
pyramids		power
	architecture	
wealth & luxury		pharaoh
	life after death	
temples		Sophocles
	softness	
columns/pillars		suffering
	philosophy	
poverty,hardship		autocracy
	mass	
sculptures		Oedipus Rex
	gods	
pylons		restraint
	friezes	
statues		order
	colossal size	
poems		democracy
	change	
Horus		freedom

**4. OUTLINING THE ESSAY.** A list with groupings according to several organizing principles usually makes outlining an essay much easier than outlining from scratch. To illustrate how to make an outline from a grouped list, we will use the above list and organizing principles to make a preliminary outline for an essay on "Religious Art in Ancient Egypt and Greece".

The first step is to reorganize our listed items according to the organizing principles used to group them. Study the list of items and organizing principles on the next page before continuing.

## EXAMPLE: LIST OF GROUPED ITEMS & THEIR ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

### Religious Art in Ancient Egypt and Greece

#### **items**

temples, the Parthenon  
temple of Athena Nike  
temple of Karnak, pyramids, tombs

friezes, metopes  
capitals, columns, pylons

realism, idealism, order,  
restraint, softness, individualism  
moderation, lightness

rigidity, mass, stylized  
colossal size, power, stability  
ostentatious heaviness

change, democracy  
poverty, freedom, hardship

pharaoh, autocracy  
wealth, rigidity, luxury

hubris, fate  
life after death, suffering

Horus, Athena

vases

tomb walls, papyrus

animals, gods & goddesses

Phidias's 'Athena'  
Praxiteles's Hermes &  
Dionysus, Venus de Milo,  
Winged Victory

diorite statues of  
pharaohs & their  
families,  
giant statues of Ramses II,  
the Sphinx

#### **organizing principle**

types of architecture

parts of temples

qualities of Greek art

qualities of Egyptian art

characteristics of  
Greek society

characteristics of  
Egyptian society

themes in Greek  
tragedies & epic poems

gods & goddesses

Greek painting

Egyptian painting

metamorphosis

Greek sculptures

Egyptian sculptures



he outline used as a guide in writing an essay should have the same basic structure as the essay itself: title, introduction, body paragraphs and

conclusion. An outline for any essay should, therefore, have the following form:

- I. Title
- II. Introduction
  - A. Opening Statement
  - B. Thesis Statement
- III. Main Points and Support
- IV. Conclusion
  - A. Summary
  - B. Tie together thesis and body

**When making an outline, begin with the thesis statement.** If you know what you are going to try to accomplish, the rest of the outline will be easy to construct (provided you have done the necessary reading, studying, listing and organizing).

One might take for the thesis statement of our example the following: "Ancient Greek religious art expresses a restrained sense of power, whereas ancient Egyptian religious art expresses an oppressive sense of power." (The title should then be changed to indicate the narrowing of focus on power, e.g., "The Expression of Power in the Religious Art of Ancient Egypt and Greece.")

**In developing the outline for the essay, the thesis statement can serve as a focal point.** First, what are the main topics to be brought up? Second, what main points and support for them will you produce? Use your organized list as a guide. For example, some of the main topics to be brought up in our example essay might be:

- the massive size of sculptures, tombs and temples in Egypt
- the moderate size of sculptures, tombs and temples in Greece
- the unchanging, rigid, solid quality of Egyptian sculptures
- the changing from idealistic to realistic sculpture in Greece
- the humanity of the Greek Gods
- the divinity of Egyptian pharaohs
- the Greek view of life: life is hard and then you die!
- the Egyptian view of life: life is easy and then you live forever!
- the theme of conflict among the gods in paragraphs
- the animal motif in Egyptian religious art

. . .

**The topics, of course, are not taken directly from the organized list of ideas.**

That list, rather, is used to jar the mind so that some topics might emerge. An example of an outline based on the above list of grouped ideas and the list of main topics is given on the next page. Study it and compare it to the aforementioned lists before going on.



## EXAMPLE OUTLINE

### The Expression of Power in Ancient Egyptian and Greek Art

#### I. Introduction.

A. Opening statement.

B. Thesis: Ancient Greek religious art expresses a restrained sense of power, whereas ancient Egyptian religious art expresses an oppressive sense of power.

#### II. Body paragraphs.

A. Egyptian temples, tombs and sculptures are massive, whereas Greek ones are moderate in size.

1. examples of Egyptian buildings and sculptures

2. " " Greek " "

B. Egyptian art is unchanging and rigid, whereas Greek art changes and becomes naturalistic and realistic

1. Egyptian examples

2. Greek "

C. Egyptian art depicts a divine pharaoh, whereas Greek art depicts humanized gods

1. Egyptian examples

2. Greek "

D. There are even significant differences in painting.

1. comment on Egyptian tomb and papyrus painting

2. comment on Greek vase painting

E. The Greek view of life contrasts with their view of the gods: life is hard, but even the gods have problems despite being immortal, beautiful and ageless.

F. The Egyptian view of life: life is good because we have a divine ruler to guide and provide for us (so the divine ruler must appear very powerful).

III. Conclusion: summarize and tie together the contrasting points about the two societies and their religious art with respect to the expression of power. The Greeks express power moderately and gracefully, whereas the Egyptians express power oppressively. The Greek view emphasizes man's dignity as a free and responsible creature doing the best he can in an unpredictable and harsh world. The Egyptian view emphasizes man's dependence on the pharaoh and his need for continued obedience if he is to enjoy the good life made possible by his divine ruler.

## EXERCISE 8 - LISTING, GROUPING & OUTLINING IDEAS

This exercise should be done in preparation for writing an essay.

a. Brainstorm to come up with a list of ideas on the topic. Don't criticize any idea as it occurs to you. The idea is to come up with as many ideas as possible. Listing should continue either for a set period of time (e.g., 15 minutes) or until you are satisfied with the list.

b. Group the ideas.

c. Generate an outline of the essay from your grouping of ideas.

d. Use the outline as a basis for the first draft of your essay.

. . . .

## 5. WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT.

The purpose of listing, grouping and outlining ideas is to methodically provide focus and coherence to writing an essay. Nevertheless, following this or any other method of writing will not automatically lead to a satisfactory paper the first time through. After writing the essay, you will need to edit it and rewrite it. In fact, some essays will require several drafts and revisions.

If you have listed, grouped and organized your ideas before attempting to write the first draft of an essay, you might consider writing the conclusion before you write the body paragraphs or the introduction. For, you should already have a thesis statement and have a fairly good idea of the topics and support you're going to present before you begin writing your essay. Having a thesis statement and knowing in general what kind of support you will be giving, will allow you to write a paragraph which ties together your thesis and support. Having established a thesis and a conclusion before writing your essay will give added *focus* to your writing.

Next, write the body paragraphs, making sure that each paragraph sticks to a clear topic and that each point is supported by appropriate examples, quotations or reasons. Try to make clear transitions between paragraphs, but do not spend too much time worrying about transitions in the first draft. You can work on tying the material together when you edit and revise your essay.

Conclude writing your first draft by writing the introduction to your essay. Include in your introduction enough background information--including definitions of key terms, if necessary-- so that your thesis statement will be clearly understood. [Sometimes a separate paragraph may be needed to define key terms. If there are several terms that must be defined, but whose definitions are not needed to understand the thesis statement, a separate paragraph ought to precede the body paragraphs.] Try to give some hint as to the significance of the topic.

**6. EDIT YOUR WRITING.** Use the checklists from activities 37 and 44 to guide you in editing your essay. Pay particular attention to making transitions and to providing sufficient support for your points.

**7. REWRITE YOUR ESSAY.** Use your edited draft as a basis for rewriting your essay. When your next draft is completed, repeat step 6. If necessary repeat step 7.

### 2.3.1 CONCLUSION: A WRITING METHOD

Methodical writing often helps the beginning writer accomplish his or her task without as much agony and grief as non-methodical writing. There are several methods for writing satisfactorily. The SLOWER method recommended here will serve many of you as it is; some of you may benefit from your own modified version of the method. Still others may be confident enough as writers to begin by outlining the essay or by writing the first draft. However, the benefits from listing, organizing and outlining before writing will be reaped not only immediately in the effect of better writing, but long after your essay is written, as well, in the form of more

coherent, focused thinking.

### **2.3.2 SUMMARY: USING THE SLOWER METHOD**

Use the SLOWER method to write your next essay. To refresh your memory, SLOWER stands for:

**S**elect a topic.

**L**ist your ideas.

**O**rganize your ideas.

**O**utline your essay.

**W**rite your first draft.

**E**dit your first draft.

**R**ewrite your essay.

## 2.4 WRITING THE IN-CLASS ESSAY

### 2.4.2 Preparing for the Exam

Review the "Taking Tests" section of the *Student Success Guide - Study Skills* book, p. 67. Then review the material of the previous section of this book on the **SLOOWER** method of writing.

Make sure that you have enough paper for the exam. You will need one or two sheets for listing and outlining, and several sheets for your essay. (I recommend you have at least 10-12 sheets of blank, lined, white, 8½" by 11" paper for each essay.) Bring a pencil with eraser and a pen (blue or black ink) to the test.

### 2.4.2 Writing the Essay

After you have read the question carefully, are sure that you know what is being asked, and have budgeted your time, do some brainstorming and write up a short list of ideas. Then, take some time to organize and categorize your ideas in outline form before writing the essay. Try to outline your ideas according to some logical order, e.g., pros and cons, general to specific, contrasting views. How much time you should spend on listing and outlining will vary from person to person and test to test. Generally, about one-fourth of the time you have for taking the essay exam should be spent preparing to write the essay. Make sure your outline covers the entire question. Before writing your essay, write down a clear-cut thesis statement. Do not waste time by copying the question.

**Write your conclusion first.** Make it brief: no more than four or five sentences. Write it on a blank, unnumbered sheet of paper and set it aside. (Most teachers will require that you write your essays in ink, Check with your instructor if you are in doubt as to whether you may write in pencil.) Your outline should be specific enough for you to state in summary form (for your conclusion) your thesis and tie together your main supporting material. If you write your conclusion first, you will have greater focus and coherence in your essay--providing, that is, that you know what your thesis is and what support you are going to provide for it. If you have studied properly, this task will not be as difficult as it might sound.

Next, write your introduction. Make sure it includes a clear statement of your thesis and enough background information to give the reader a good idea of the nature (and, if possible, the **significance**) of the topic.

Before writing the body paragraphs, remember to use separate paragraphs for each major topic or point brought up. Provide the necessary support for each point, viz., examples, illustrations, quotations or paraphrases, facts, dates, events, explanations or premises. Be as specific, detailed and precise as possible when giving your support. And, avoid presenting irrelevant details, however interesting. Don't forget to use appropriate transitional expressions.

As you are writing, you may discover a better logic to follow than the one used in your outline. Don't be afraid to deviate from your outline. By all means, follow the better way of presenting your case. You can do this without having to rewrite your essay (and thereby take up valuable time) if you **skip one or two lines while writing and write only one paragraph on a page**. By skipping lines you leave room to insert phrases or sentences. [Indicate an insertion by putting a wedge ( ^ ) immediately below the place of insertion. Write the inserted material in the blank space above the wedge.] By writing only one paragraph per page, you give yourself the option of moving paragraphs around. Take care to keep track of the order of presentation by numbering each page. If you move a paragraph forward, make sure you change its page number and the number of all following pages. While writing your essay, use your pencil to paginate so that changes will not be messy. Before turning in your essay, use your pen to go over the penciled page numbers.

Before turning in your essay, proofread it. Make sure you allot enough time to do this. Correct any mechanical errors you find and make minor insertions, if necessary. Make sure you have paginated correctly. Don't forget to paginate the conclusion.

### 2.4.3 SUMMARY: WRITING THE IN-CLASS ESSAY

1. Brainstorm and list ideas.
2. Write the conclusion.
3. Write the introduction.
4. Write the body paragraphs.
5. Proofread and correct the essay.

## GENERAL WRITING TIPS

1. Be as clear and as brief as possible.

1.1 Avoid unnecessary words.

1.2 Avoid padding.

1.3 Use only words you are familiar with.

1.4 Keep your sentences short.

2. Be as specific and accurate as possible.

2.1 Avoid broad, unjustified generalizations.

2.2 Include names, dates, specific events or ideas that strengthen your points.

2.3 Use examples, illustrations and quotations, but use them sparingly. Remember to be brief.<sup>1</sup>

3. Give credit to your sources.

3.1 If you take an idea from an author (even if you don't copy it exactly) and write it down in your paper without any indication of the source of your idea, then you appear to be presenting the ideas as if it were your own. This kind of idea theft is known as **plagiarism**.<sup>2</sup>

4. Edit and revise your writing.

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<sup>1</sup>Examples and quotations should flow smoothly with what precedes and follows them. If they are too long, they can cause the reader to lose track of what he or she is reading. As a rule of thumb, every quotation should be commented on and the quotation should be no longer than the commentary.

<sup>2</sup>A common way to credit a source of an idea is to use a footnote. There are several acceptable ways to footnote. Find out the method your teacher requires.



4.1 Correct errors.

4.2 Make smooth transitions.

4.3 Add detailed support where necessary.

4.4 Eliminate everything that is unnecessary wither to support your points or to help understand either the meaning or the significance of them.

## SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

### ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

#### EXERCISE 1 - WRITING: CHECKING THE BASICS

*Below is the corrected version of this essay. Corrections are underlined.*

#### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Throughout history the question of capital punishment has been a cause of much controversy. I believe that capital punishment is not morally justifiable on the grounds that it is immoral to kill a human being. And, the effect of killing criminals is to encourage violence.

Those in favor of capital punishment claim that it is a deterrent to crime. They also logically claim that it helps to alleviate the overcrowded situation in most federal and state institutions. Another often heard defense is that executing criminals could save the taxpayers many dollars that could be spent on food, shelter and clothing during a lifetime sentence.

There has actually been little to substantiate the deterrent theory because few criminals consider getting caught when planning an illegal action. The theory is, for the most part, archaic and irrelevant to the question of capital punishment. It is, in fact, another question in itself.

While it is true that our penal institutions are overcrowded, this is not a reason to kill people. If this logic is accepted, it would be permissible to kill three-quarters of New York City. Crowded conditions and criminal punishment should not be confused with each other. They're separate problems whose existence indicates that there is too much confusion.

As to the third claim, that much money would be saved, I ask you to value the worth of a dead man. While it is true that the criminal who has been executed will no longer commit crimes, a person who is helped to become a useful citizen can become quite valuable.

It is true that there may be incorrigible people who many people will think should be killed; but that person has the same right as everyone else. He needs, perhaps, more help than others, but I do not believe that it's really a sound reason to kill him or have him killed. The whole of society is affected in a bad way when we start killing in the name of law and order. The country's attitude better start changing or we'll all be in a mess.

If it is wrong to kill one man, it's twice as wrong to kill two.

## EXERCISE 2 - CLARITY IN WRITING

1. This paragraph is a compilation of statements made by drivers who had been in automobile accidents. Most of the statements are examples of not saying what one means to say--of saying something that literally means something different from what we understand was probably intended.

2. As we were walking in the rain, the house lights got dimmer and dimmer. I saw Mary and asked her how her mother was. Mary hated her mother. Mary was very cruel. She told me that Carol and Carol's mother did not see eye to eye on Carol's friendship with Jonathan. Mary's a sociologist who makes her living by publishing articles on the degrading effects of poverty and ignorance. Mary once had severe pains when she lay on her side. That situation lasted for over a year. [Note: there are several alternative ways to clarify the above statements. The first sentence has the house walking. It is clear that in the second sentence 'her' refers to Mary in both cases. 'She' is ambiguous in statement three. 'She' and both instances of 'her' are ambiguous in statement four. And, 'she' and 'her' are ambiguous in statement five. Statement five also says that the sociologist is living in poverty and degradation--which is probably not what was meant. 'She' is ambiguous in statement six, which asserts that "she" laid on her side for a very long time and got a severe pain (who wouldn't?!), but that is probably not what was meant.]

3. This passage is George Orwell's famous 'translation' of the well-known verse from Ecclesiastes): "I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. Orwell comments on his translation into "modern English": "This is a parody, but not a very gross one....The whole tendency of modern prose is away from concreteness....if you or I were told to write a few lines on the uncertainty of human fortunes, we should probably come much nearer to my imaginary sentence than to the one from *Ecclesiastes*. See George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language" in *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 1957) pp. 149-150.

4. This passage is a compilation of statements made by representatives of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission after the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island. "An event" was a euphemism for nuclear accident. "Slight energetic disassembly" is a euphemism for explosion and "rapid oxidation" means fire. The expression "normal aberration" is self-contradictory, a feeble attempt to make the horrible seem normal. "Infiltration" and the reference to plutonium "taking up residence" were euphemisms for radiation contamination. The expression "acceptable flat band of risk" is exactly the kind of expression Orwell warned us of.

5. The expression 'police brutality' is too vague. Some criteria for identifying what kind of behavior by a police officer is 'brutal' are needed. The expressions 'too much violence' and 'excessive brutality' are too vague. Words such as 'liberty' and 'brutality' are highly emotive, though what their cognitive content is may be difficult to state.

6. The situations referred to--where abortion should not be allowed--ought to be described in clear detail.

7. This passage is very obscure. A clearer version might read: "I will assume in this paper that the unborn is a person and is due all the rights due to any person, especially the right to life. I am aware that many people disagree with this position."

8. This passage seems clear enough.

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### ANSWERS TO EXERCISE 3 - CHECKING TITLES AND INTRODUCTIONS

1. The title is good but not great. It could be more specific, indicating what position the author takes. The introductory paragraph is poor. The connection between the title and the question asked is not clear. Nor is it clear what the purpose of the paper is. It is clear the author has written on the subject of prayer in school and that the author believes (with Reagan) that children are not now, but used to be, free to acknowledge God in the schoolroom. But we have no idea what kind of argument the author is going to make.

2. The title indicates that the author is going to address the issue of the morality of the death penalty. But the first paragraph indicates that the author has no such intention; there the author states that he/she is going to present conflicting views on the subject of the death penalty. We have no idea why the author is going to do this, i.e., what significance there is in presenting "both sides". (Does the author intend to present the 'right side' and the 'wrong side'?)

3. The title is ambiguous. Is the author indicating that he/she is going to defend the claim that abortion is morally justifiable? Or is the author indicating that he/she is going to write about some moral issues with respect to abortion? The opening paragraph is obscure. The author seems to be saying that abortion is a complicated issue. The rest of the paragraph is unclear and unfocused.

4. This title and introduction are very good. They indicate a writer with good focus and a clear idea of what he/she is about.

5. This title and opening paragraph, while cluttered with details, does indicate a clear focus. There is no doubt what this paper is about and what it is going to try to accomplish.

6. This title and introduction indicate that the author believes there is a connection between the use of handguns and the rising tide of violence. It is obvious that the author is going to argue that

there is such a connection and that regulating handgun use will have a significant effect on violent crime. But the author does not say this--we must surmise it from the kind of claims he/she makes. We shouldn't have to make surmises as to what the author is going to do; the author ought to make it clear to us in the title and introductory paragraphs. This example is certainly more focused than number 1-3, but less focused than 4 or 5.

7. This title is certainly specific. The data presented in the opening paragraph clearly indicate that the author thinks many lives could be saved by requiring seat belts to be worn. The author should state this in the opening paragraph and give some indication as to what kind of evidence there is that he/she is going to present in defense of mandatory seat belt legislation.

8. There is a good indication what this essay is going to be about and what position the author is going to take. The author should have stated what the dilemma is that he/she refers to. More focus could be indicated by stating precisely what dilemma it is we face today, the relationship of the right to die to that dilemma, and the general position the author plans to take with respect to the dilemma and the right to die.

9. This is certainly a very specific title. The opening paragraph has excellent focus. The author demonstrates good background knowledge regarding the issue and presents a good outline of the kinds of arguments that have been made on the topic addressed.

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## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO EXERCISE 4 - CHECKING POINTS AND SUPPORT

### Argument Favoring Mandatory Seat Belt Legislation

The United States has one of the lowest vehicular fatality rates, per miles driven, in the world.

Deaths per 100

million miles have steadily declined from 11.2 in 1945 to

3.1 in 1977. Despite this

seemingly admirable claim, 45,000 persons died on U.S.

freeways in 1982 as a result

of vehicular trauma. The

problem of road related trauma

accounts for more than 90 per

cent of all transport

fatalities and is the fourth

B Too many people die  
in automobile  
accidents each year.

B

B

B

leading public health problem in the United States. For young adults, ranging in age from 15 to 24, this is the leading cause of death.

B

With the number of fatalities the United States is now experiencing, it would be relatively easy to acquire the necessary number of names to fill a memorial wall similar to that of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

I

But there is still a larger problem that has to be dealt with after the dead are buried. The costs to society, in terms of medical and rehabilitation costs, insurance premiums, and lost productivity far exceed the actual economic burdens imposed by deaths.

M

Automobile accidents also cost us billions

M

of dollars a year in lost wages and productivity to employers

This problem is due to the sheer number of non-fatal injuries, which is currently estimated at 4 million annually. For instance, in medical cases where the costs to the patient or family amounted to at least \$100,000, 50 per cent had suffered brain and/or spinal cord damage.

R premise, support for previous claim

Road trauma produces more new paraplegics and quadriplegics each year in the United States than any other form of accident. It is also the leading cause of epilepsy.

E

R - premise in support of main point in paragraph

Additionally, on-the-job costs from road trauma directly and indirectly cost U.S. employers an average of approximately \$120,000 per victim as a result of medical insurance,

R - " "

R - " "

workers compensation, unemployment taxes, lost workdays and administrative costs. The total annual price tag for automobile deaths and injuries is approaching 57 billion dollars!

R - " "

Yet, we could significantly reduce this cost by enacting mandatory seat belt legislation. Over 41 countries have enacted some form of seat belt legislation, and 21 of those foreign laws have been studied by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The focus of the evaluation was the history of the laws, implementation, specification of each law, compliance of seat belt usage and the overall effectiveness of each law with respect to reducing injuries and deaths. The study found that attitudes about seat belt use and laws did not correlate with observed behavior. Moreover, enforcement by police--which in most cases was limited to a small fine and non-selective enforcement--was significant in equating compliance and enactment of legislation. All countries saw an immediate 200-300 per cent increase in compliance upon enactment. Moreover, the average reduction in fatalities and injuries was from 15-30 per cent.

M

B

B

B

B

B

R - premise in support of main point in paragraph

Of course, it is difficult to predict if the United States would experience similar success if mandatory seat belt legislation were to be enacted here. But, Canada--a country much like our own in many relevant respects--witnessed an increase in seat belt usage from 17 percent to 76.8 percent when they enacted their seat belt law. Also, after three years of living with the new law, Canadians have seen the automobile death and injury rate drop by 13 per cent, the number of hospitalized victims drop by 16 per cent, the cost of treatment drop by 10 per cent and the average cost of rehabilitation drop by 6.5 per cent. Some of these effects, though, can be attributed to the fact that speed limits were reduced during this same period.

S

R - premise in support of subsidiary point

R - premise in support of both the subsidiary point in this paragraph and the main point of the previous paragraph

R - explanation

Opponents to mandatory seat belt legislation argue that the state has no right to limit their liberty unless their behavior is harmful to others. The truth is that it is not only the person who does not wear a seat belt who is harmed when an accident occurs. The rest of us are harmed, too, by increasing our automobile and hospitalization insurance costs and by increasing our tax burden as we are forced to support more

R - premise used in argument against author's position

R - premise in support of main point

R - premise in support of main point (and of previous premise)



and more victims and their families with state monies. People who used to contribute to the economy and the community now become financial burdens to the community. The mandatory seat belt law is no more an unreasonable limitation of liberty than are traffic laws. Consequently, Congress or the states ought to enact mandatory seat belt legislation as soon as possible.

R - premise in support of main point

R - " "

M

. . .

## ANSWER TO EXERCISE 5

The following transitional expressions should have been noted: *but, for instance, additionally, yet, moreover, moreover, of course, but, also, consequently.*

## ANSWERS TO EXERCISE 6

1. This conclusion ties together several points and gives a good indication of what the essay was about and what it tried to accomplish.
2. This conclusion does not tie together any points; it does not summarize what the author tried to accomplish. This is not a very good conclusion.
3. This conclusion is practically unintelligible.
4. This conclusion is detached from the reasons alluded to. It should have been part of that same paragraph.
5. This paragraph seems like it might be an introductory, rather than a concluding, paragraph. Rather than tie material together, it seems to present a fresh argument.

6. There is no clear idea as to how this statement connects with the rest of the essay.
7. It is never a good idea to conclude by saying that you have made a good argument. Let the reader decide the merits of your essay. Your conclusion should tie together the points of your essay or summarize what it tried to accomplish.