



W.V.C.ED • P.O. Box 8418
Greenville, SC 29604
wvanceave@wvced.com
website: wvced.com
facebook: W.V.C.ED

WITH A PURPOSE

WRITING NARRATIVE, INFORMATIVE, AND
OPINION/ARGUMENT TEXT

William Van Cleave • Educational Consultant • W.V.C.ED
OELAS • December 2015

I. Writing in Different Genres

- Similarities & Differences
- Academic and Domain-Specific Vocabulary
- Working Foundational Skills

II. Narrative Writing

- A Matter of Style
- Practicing With Existing Content
- Using a Graphic Organizer

III. Informative Writing

- Highlighting, Notetaking, and Getting the Gist
- Listing & Categorizing
- Using a Graphic Organizer

IV. Opinion/Argument Writing

- Taking a Stand & Making a List
- Supporting Your Position
- Using a Graphic Organizer

KINDERGARTEN WRITING NOTES

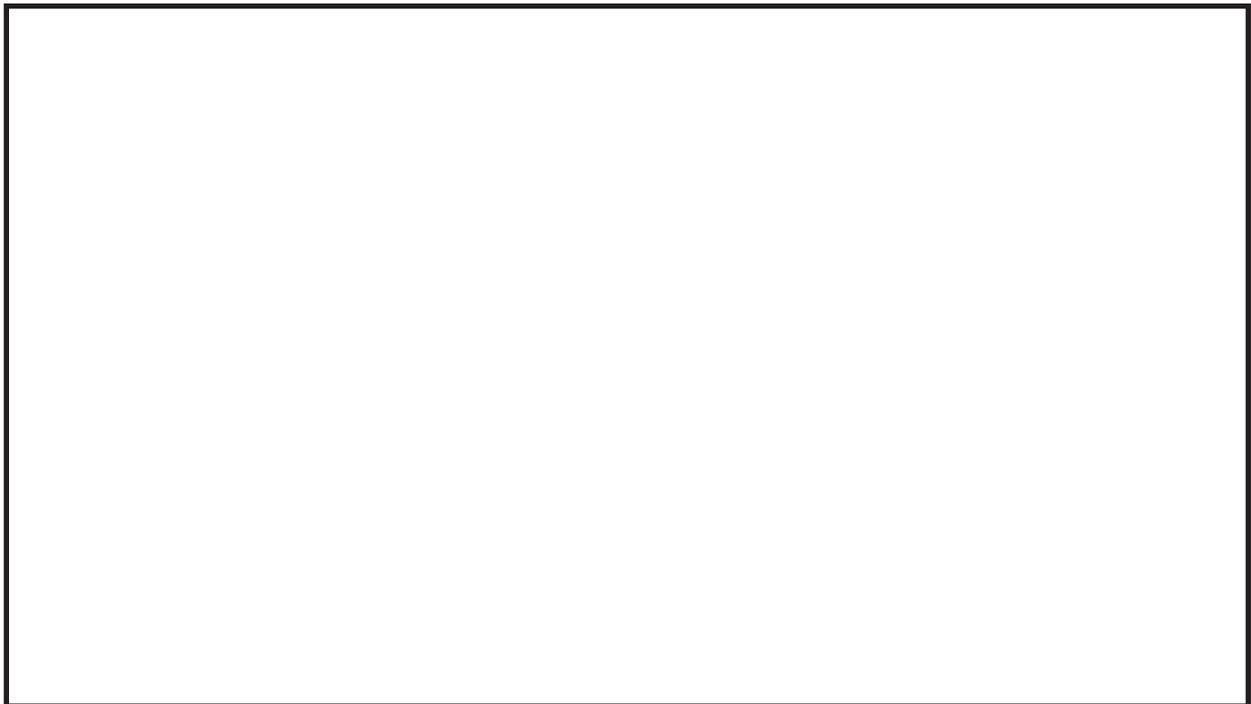
Kindergarten students should “use a combination of drawing, dictation, and writing” to create narratives, opinions, and informative text. Graphic organizers for their initial projects might include a box for an illustration and a line underneath for its sentence (see figure below). Students would share additional information aloud:

Narrative: An appropriate response might include a single sentence written under a drawing that includes all of its elements. For example, the child might write, “We had fun at Six Flags.” Above it the student would show the people who went, all enjoying themselves at Six Flags.

Opinion: These pieces typically involve identifying the topic (or book) and sharing an opinion about it. An appropriate response might include a single sentence written under a drawing that includes all of its elements. For example, the child might write, “I liked the story _____.” Above it she would draw a scene she liked from the story.

Informative Text: For one of these pieces, the student would name the topic and share some information about it. An appropriate response might include a single sentence written under a drawing that includes all of its elements. For example, the child might write, “Frogs have _____.” or “Frogs are _____.” Above it he would draw a picture of the frog that includes characteristics mentioned in the sentence.

Longer pieces will involve significant teacher involvement.



NARRATIVE WRITING – ELEMENTARY

Narrative writing involves relating a story. Some narratives are autobiographical, some tell about an event the student witnessed or learned about, and others are fictitious. Similar to process or step writing and different from reason or persuasion writing, narrative writing requires the student to put events in chronological order.

Though length and sophistication will and should vary by skill and grade level, all narrative writing includes these characteristics:

- situation with characters and setting
- sequence of events
- conclusion

As the writer develops his craft, his writing will employ these characteristics:

- dialogue to develop events
- description to develop events
- transition words, phrases, and clauses

Provide older students with the Signal Words for Reading, Writing, & Notetaking list for transitions. For younger students, here is a simpler list:

Some Temporal Transition Words for Younger Writers

<u>first</u>	<u>second</u>	<u>third</u>	<u>last</u>
before	later	afterward	at last
earlier	next	after that	at the end
previously	soon	then	finally
at first	now	next	tomorrow
yesterday	today	later in the day	
in the morning	then	in the evening	<u>at the same time</u>
	in the afternoon		during
			meanwhile

Though the basic elements of a narrative remain the same, as students grow older, they should create narrative pieces that are more elaborate and sophisticated.

The graphic organizer on the following page can be used as a guide for narrative writing; notice that the Narrative Template is remarkably similar to the Basic Paragraph Template. It can be simplified for younger writers and those with more basic skills and expanded for older writers and those with more developed skills. One way to expand it is to vertically bisect each of the Event boxes to allow for a Details section. Students can then elaborate upon each event by including details about it. As students become ready to use dialogue and description to develop their events, an expanded template may prove useful. Additional events and more sophisticated elaboration may be necessary.

NARRATIVE WRITING – MIDDLE & UPPER

Narrative writing involves relating a story. Some narratives are autobiographical, some tell about an event the student witnessed or learned about, and others are fictitious. Similar to process or step writing and different from reason or persuasion writing, narrative writing requires the student to put events in chronological order.

Though length and sophistication will and should vary by skill and grade level, even at the 6th grade level narrative writing includes the following (highlights from the C.C.S.S.):

- situation with characters and setting
- sequence of events that logically unfolds
- use of dialogue, pacing, and description to develop characters and story
- use of transition words, phrases, and clauses
- conclusion that follows from the story

As the writer develops her craft, her writing will employ these characteristics (highlights from the C.C.S.S.):

- use of character reflection (8)
- establishment of problem, situation, or observation to engage reader (9)
- use of particular tone (11)

As students grow older, their writing should show increasingly sophisticated transitions between events and various storylines. Provide students with the Signal Words for Reading, Writing, & Notetaking list for transitions.

The graphic organizer on the following page can be used as a guide for narrative writing; notice that the Narrative Template is remarkably similar to the Basic Paragraph Template. It can be simplified for younger writers and those with more basic skills and expanded for older writers and those with more developed skills. One way to expand it is to vertically bisect each of the Event boxes to allow for a Details section. Students can then elaborate upon each event by including details about it.

As students become ready to use dialogue and description to develop their events, an expanded template may prove useful. The students should generate many details to elaborate upon the key events of their narratives and then determine how best to organize them into categories, each of which will be represented by a supporting paragraph or section of their narrative pieces.

Note: The Narrative Template should not be used until the student has developed a list of events (brainstorming) that may be used to develop her narrative.

READING & WRITING NARRATIVES – INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

The essential components of a story are best introduced through analyzing stories written by others. Whether you use the provided organizer or one you have developed or discovered, map out others' stories first to help students understand both how a story works and how the organizer will facilitate an understanding of the story's components.

The Road Runner videos (available on youtube) serve as a good introduction to the elements of the story. They include the following story components:

- Obvious character introduction in the opening moment of the movie
- Clear setting
- Clearly stated conflict - I want to eat the Road Runner; Road Runners are tough to catch
- Series of events - times when Coyote attempts to catch the Road Runner
- Resolution - Road Runner chased off into the sunset
- Conclusion - That's All Folks

For high schoolers, a night time criminal investigation show (e.g., *CSI*, *Law and Order*, and so on) works well with the Narrative Template. Even sitcoms work well.

From there, move into fiction you have read to the students or they are reading for themselves. Literally any short story or novel should work in the Narrative Template with minor modifications as necessary.

Use gradual release (first coined by Pearson and Gallagher in 1983 but in wide practice and promoted by Anita Archer, amongst others). First, fill out a template in front of the students. (Avoid providing them with a completed form - better to create it while the students can see you work.) Then, fill one in with student input/guidance. (This stage might be repeated several times.) Eventually, have students fill in one independently on a text they understand well. Finally, they should be able to fill in the template for a story they've read independently.

Once these reading comprehension practices have been internalized, students can then create their own narratives, using the now practiced template. Often, the first story created is done best in small groups where ideas can be generated, shared, and incorporated into an overall story, with an appointed group recorder.

Note: The Narrative Template should not be used until the student has developed a list of events (brainstorming) that may be used to develop her narrative.

Narrative Template

After deciding upon the topic, but before using this template, create a list of possible events for your narrative. Then, choose those you will use.

Topic: _____	
Setting (time, place, atmosphere)	Characters (who, what)
Situation/Problem/Conflict	
Event #1	
Event #2	
Event #3	
Solution/Resolution to Situation/Problem/Conflict	End/Conclusion

OPINION WRITING – ELEMENTARY

Opinion writing (called argument writing with older students) involves stating an opinion and supporting it. Students need to remember they are providing reasons for something they think or feel. (One version of opinion writing is persuasion writing. The support you provide in persuasion writing is designed to convince the reader to share your point of view.)

Though length and sophistication will and should vary by skill and grade level, all opinion writing includes these characteristics:

- opinion on book or other topic
- reasons to support opinion
- conclusion

As the writer develops his craft, his writing will employ these characteristics:

- organizational structure that groups ideas
- transition words, phrases, and clauses that link opinion to reasons

Provide older students with the Signal Words for Reading, Writing, & Notetaking list for transitions. For younger students, here is a simpler list:

Some Opinion Transition Words for Younger Writers

before	second, third,	finally, last	because
first	etc.		but
one, one of the	then, next,		so
first	another,		
	and, also, etc.		

Though the basic elements of an opinion remain the same, as students grow older, they should create opinion pieces that are more elaborate and sophisticated.

The graphic organizer on the following page should be used as a guide for opinion writing; notice that the Opinion Template is remarkably similar to a Basic Paragraph Template. It can be simplified for younger writers and those with more basic skills and expanded for older writers and those with more developed skills. One way to expand it is to vertically bisect each of the Opinion boxes to allow for a Details section. Students can then elaborate upon each opinion by including details about it.

As students become ready to use more description and transition words, phrases, and clauses, an expanded template may prove useful. The students should generate many reasons in support of their opinion and then determine how best to organize them into categories, each of which will be represented by a supporting paragraph or section of their paper.

ARGUMENT WRITING – MIDDLE & UPPER

Argument writing involves stating an argument and supporting it. This argument is often called the claim or thesis statement.

Though length and sophistication will and should vary by skill and grade level, even at the 6th grade level argument writing includes the following (highlights from the C.C.S.S.):

- claim (stand or thesis)
- organized reasons and evidence in support of claim
- use of credible sources
- use of phrases and clauses to clarify relationships among claims and reasons
- formal style
- conclusion (statement or paragraph)

As the writer develops his craft, his writing will employ these characteristics (highlights from the C.C.S.S.):

- recognition of alternate claims (7)
- recognition of and ability to distinguish position from alternate claims (8)
- ability to develop claims and counter claims fairly while pointing out strengths and weaknesses of each (9)

As students grow older, their writing should show increasingly sophisticated transitions between claims and their reasons and between claims and counter claims. Provide older students with the Signal Words for Reading, Writing, & Notetaking list for transitions.

The graphic organizer on the following page should be used as a guide for argument writing; notice that this template is remarkably similar to a Basic Paragraph Template. It can be simplified for younger writers and those with more basic skills and expanded for older writers and those with more developed skills. One way to expand it is to vertically bisect each of the Reason boxes to allow for a Details section. Students can then elaborate upon each reason by including details about it. One Reason box can be modified to allow for the counterclaim and its explanation and/or discount as appropriate.

As students become ready to use more description and transition words, phrases, and clauses, an expanded template may prove useful. The students should generate many reasons in support of their opinions and then determine how best to organize them into categories, each of which will be represented by a supporting paragraph or section of their paper.

Opinion Template

Topic: _____

List of 5 Reasons

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Star the 3 reasons you like best. Each will become a supporting sentence.

Opinion

Reason #1

Reason #2

Reason #3

Conclusion (Restates Opinion)

Argument Template

Topic: _____

List of
5 Reasons

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Star the 3 reasons you like best. Each will become a supporting sentence.

Argument

Reason #1

Reason #2

Reason #3

Conclusion (Restates Opinion)

INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING – ELEMENTARY

Informative/explanatory writing involves examining a topic and sharing information about it. Part of the process here will be obtaining information about the topic. Students may need to develop highlighting, notetaking, and summarizing skills in order to accomplish this kind of writing.

Though length and sophistication will and should vary by skill and grade level, all informative writing includes these characteristics:

- introduction of topic
- information about topic
- conclusion

As the writer develops his craft, his writing will employ these characteristics:

- logical grouping of related information
- facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, etc. to develop topic
- transition words, phrases, and clauses

Provide older students with the Signal Words for Reading, Writing, & Notetaking list for transitions. For younger students, here is a simpler list:

Some Informational Transition Words for Younger Writers

first	second, third, etc.	finally, last
one, one of the first	then, next, another,	in conclusion
one example	and, also, etc.	
to start with		

Though the basic elements of an informative/explanatory piece remain the same, as students grow older, they should create informative/explanatory pieces that are more elaborate and sophisticated.

The graphic organizer on the following page should be used as a guide for informative/explanatory writing; notice that the Template is remarkably similar to a Basic Paragraph Template. It can be simplified for younger writers and those with more basic skills and expanded for older writers and those with more developed skills. One way to expand it is to vertically bisect each of the Fact boxes to allow for a Details section. Students can then elaborate upon each fact by including details about it.

As students become ready to use different kinds of information and transition words, phrases, and clauses, an expanded template may prove useful. The students should generate many pieces of information designed to explain their topic and then determine how best to organize them into categories, each of which will be represented by a supporting paragraph or section of their paper.

INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING – MIDDLE/UPPER

Informative writing involves examining a topic and sharing information about it. Part of the process here will be obtaining information about the topic. Students may need to develop highlighting, notetaking, and summarizing skills in order to accomplish this kind of writing.

Though length and sophistication will and should vary by skill and grade level, all informative writing includes these characteristics (highlights from the C.C.S.S.):

- introduction of topic
- organization of ideas, concepts, and information
- development using relevant information
- use of appropriate transitions
- use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary
- use of a formal style
- conclusion

As the writer develops her craft, her writing will employ these characteristics (highlights from the C.C.S.S.):

- previewing of what is to follow as part of introduction (7)
- use of objective tone (9)
- natural progression of ideas (11)

As students grow older, their writing should show increasingly sophisticated transitions between ideas. Provide older students with the Signal Words for Reading, Writing, & Notetaking list for transitions.

The graphic organizer on the following page should be used as a guide for informational writing; notice that the Informational Template is remarkably similar to a Basic Paragraph Template. It can be simplified for younger writers and those with more basic skills and expanded for older writers and those with more developed skills. One way to expand it is to vertically bisect each of the Fact boxes to allow for a Details section. Students can then elaborate upon each fact by including details about it.

As students become ready to use different kinds of information and transition words, phrases, and clauses, an expanded template may prove useful. The students should generate many pieces of information designed to explain their topic and then determine how best to organize them into categories, each of which will be represented by a supporting paragraph or section of their paper.

Informative/Explanatory Template

Topic: _____

List of
5 Facts

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Star the 3 facts you want to use. Each will become a supporting sentence.

Topic

Fact #1

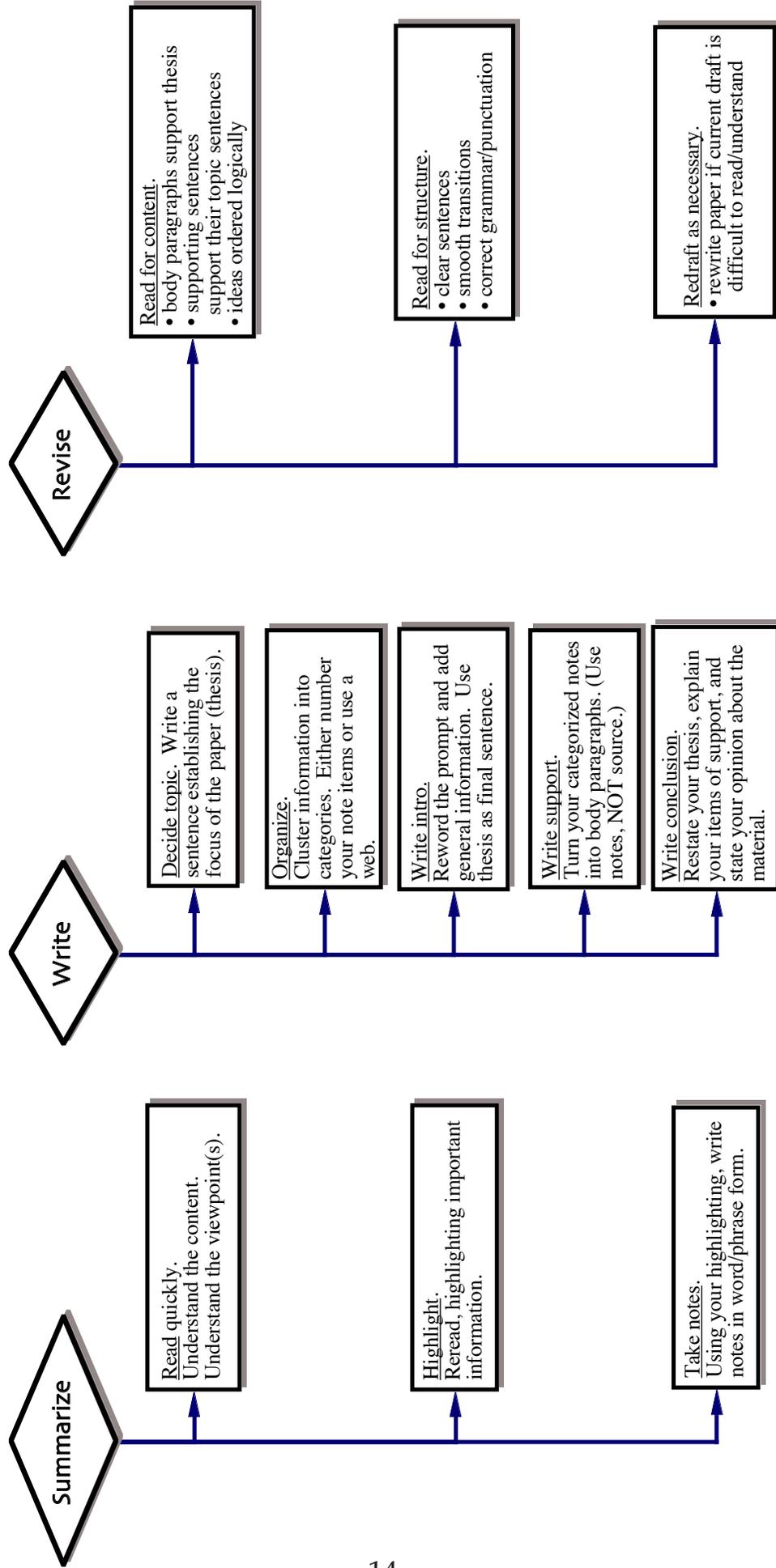
Fact #2

Fact #3

Conclusion (Explains What Has Been Learned)

Writing from Informational Text

©wvced 2015



STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING WRITING FROM INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Stage One: Highlighting:

- Students often either highlight everything or almost nothing. This practice usually indicates a lack of understanding of the purpose of highlighting or an inability (or unwillingness) to spend the time necessary to glean key information from the reading.
 - Highlighting is hard work because it involves both reading and understanding the text and then choosing the most important words and phrases.
 - Begin highlighting activities at the sentence level. (Newspapers and newsmagazines work well for this kind of activity.) Then, move to more difficult and longer text. (Textbook pages, photocopied in advance, work well for practice.)
-

Stage Two: Note-taking:

- Students are often exposed to several different kinds of notes:
 - (a) copying teacher notes from the board
 - (b) taking notes from a source, either a textbook or a research source
 - (c) taking notes from observations made when watching a movie, etc.
 - Ask yourself the following questions:
 - (a) What is the purpose of the note-taking activity?
 - (b) What do I want students to do with the finished product?This will allow you to determine how notes should be taken. Computer or by hand? Scaffolding provided? Etc.
-

Summarizing:

- Students find it difficult to write summaries without plagiarizing. Use the separate Informational Text page at the sentence, paragraph, and essay levels to help students write effective summaries.
 - Summaries are time-consuming to write. Part of the reason, though, is that they require student understanding of the material.
 - Help students generate summaries as a group. Provide paragraphs, and ask students to help you generate a list of the key elements in them. Once a list is formulated, help them generate a paragraph from that list.
-

Paraphrasing:

- Paraphrasing is putting someone else's text into your own words. Your product will be approximately the same length as the source material.
- Students, particularly those who struggle with comprehension and vocabulary, find it difficult to reword professionally written sentences.
- Begin by asking students to paraphrase individual sentences.
- Have students share these results to show their classmates that there are different possibilities.

RESPONDING TO AN ARGUMENT PROMPT

Take a Stand:

1. *Read the prompt carefully.* Make sure you understand it. Recognize both sides of the issue it addresses. Underline any key words.
 2. *Take a stand.* This can often be a single word -- yes or no. Which side you believe doesn't matter; choose the side you can best argue and support convincingly.
-

Make a List:

1. *Make a list of items that support your stand.* Support can come from personal experiences, information you've learned in your courses (e.g., historical events), movies you've seen, and books you've read.
 2. *The list is essential.* It allows you to get your ideas on paper and frees up working memory so you can process, organize, and write cohesively about your topic. Also, if you aren't able to generate a complete list, it's a quick indicator that you aren't prepared to argue that side of the topic.
-

Write Your Introductory Paragraph:

1. *Begin with broad, more general statements about the topic.* The most straightforward way to create the opening sentences of an essay is to reword the prompt, exploring both sides of the issue. General information about the topic can be included in the opening sentences, but this is NOT the place to give away the side you wish to argue.
 2. *Conclude the first paragraph with your thesis.* The thesis is your argument, the position you intend to take. It should be a well-developed sentence that clearly states your position. Often, it will also indicate the key ways you will support it (one for each of the upcoming supporting paragraphs).
-

Generate Supporting Paragraphs (use for each of 2-3 paragraphs):

1. *Write a topic sentence that defends your argument.* Each supporting paragraph will make a different defense of your argument.
 2. *Discount the opposition.* A strong argument often presents the other side and quickly discounts it. (e.g., While some may argue..., On the one hand..., Some think...but)
 3. *Present your evidence.* Provide support for your defense. Be specific to anchor the reader in your argument.
 4. *Conclude your paragraph.* Make sure the reader remembers the point you've made and how it ties back to your thesis.
-

Write Your Concluding Paragraph:

1. *Restate the issue under discussion.* Briefly mention both sides of the topic.
2. *Restate your position.* Discuss your side and the support you offered.
3. *Conclude with your opinion.* This is your last chance to convince the reader to support the side you took.

Signal Words for Reading, Writing & Notetaking

Direction Change & Contrast: A change in ideas to follow.

alternatively
 although
 as opposed to
 at the same time
 but
 conversely
 despite (the fact that)
 different from
 even so
 even though
 for all that
 however
 in contrast
 in spite of (the fact that)
 instead
 nevertheless
 nonetheless
 notwithstanding
 on the contrary
 on the other hand
 or
 otherwise
 rather
 still
 though
 unlike
 whereas
 while
 yet



Addition: Similar ideas, additional support, or evidence to follow.

additionally
 again
 also
 and
 another
 as an example
 as well
 because
 besides (that)
 equally important
 following this further
 for example
 for instance
 for one thing
 further
 furthermore
 in addition
 in light of the...it is easy to see
 in particular
 in the same vein
 in the same way
 just as
 likewise
 more (than that)
 moreover
 namely
 next
 other
 pursuing this further
 similarly
 specifically
 then
 to illustrate



Conclusion, Summary & Emphasis: Conclusion, summary, or emphasis to follow.

accordingly*
 after all
 all in all
 as a result*
 because*
 certainly
 clearly, then*
 consequently*
 finally
 for the reason (that)*
 generally
 hence*
 in a word
 in any event
 in brief
 in conclusion
 in fact
 in final analysis
 in final consideration
 in general
 in short
 in sum
 in summary
 in the end
 indeed
 last
 lastly
 naturally
 of course
 on account of*
 on the whole
 since*
 so*
 therefore*
 thus*
 to be sure
 to conclude
 to sum up
 to summarize
 truly



Sequence & Time:

after
 afterwards
 always
 as long as
 as soon as
 at first
 at last
 at length
 before
 before long
 currently

during
 earlier
 eventually
 finally
 first... second...
 third
 following
 immediately
 in the first place
 in the meantime
 later
 meanwhile
 never
 next

now
 presently
 recently
 shortly
 simultaneously
 sometimes
 soon
 so far
 subsequently
 then
 this time
 when
 whenever
 while

(* indicates cause and effect)

Note: The bent arrow signifies a change in direction while the two straight arrows represent words that continue in the same direction. The arrow on the right crosses a line to indicate an end point.

© 2013 W.V.C.ED • wvced.com
 Permission granted to copy for student use.