

Prep Packet

EXAMINATION OF WRITING COMPETENCY (**EWC**) ENG 299





Examination of Writing Competency
Office of Institutional Research & Planning
ewc@nsu.edu

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OVERVIEW

EXAMINATION OF WRITING COMPETENCY
EWC | ENG 299

WHAT

The Examination of Writing Competency (EWC) is a graduation requirement for all undergraduate students. It is a three-hour proctored exam in which students write an essay that responds to a question from a general category.

WHO

All undergraduate students (Baccalaureate and Associate degrees), including transfer and readmitted students, must take and pass the EWC. Students seeking a second undergraduate degree must take and pass the EWC unless the first degree was awarded by NSU and the student has already taken and passed the EWC. The EWC requirement for graduation is in effect for all first-time freshmen who began taking classes in Fall Semester 2001 and thereafter and for transfer and readmitted students who began taking classes in Fall 2002 and thereafter. Effective Fall 2007, all Reclamation Project students will be required to take and pass the EWC in order to graduate.

WHEN

Students should take the EWC as soon as they have completed their freshman composition courses (ENG101 and ENG102); for most students, this will be their sophomore year. Students must take the EWC before they complete 90 credit hours. Transfer students who have already completed their English requirements should take the EWC as soon as possible upon entering the university. Arrangements can also be made for students who have completed other course requirements, take online classes or have other extenuating circumstances and reside more than 60 miles away from the main campus to take a long-distance EWC. Those needing this type of assistance should contact the Assessment Office for more information.

WHERE

Due to demand, the EWC will be offered at least once per week during the fall and spring terms as well as once per month during the summer.

Students will need to register (or re-register) for the EWC with their department, via Spartan Shield or by going to the Registrar's Office at least one week prior to each exam. Exams often fill up before the closing date, so students should register early for the exam that best fits their schedules. More detailed information about the exam will be forwarded to registered students via their NSU e-mail address during the week prior to each exam date.

There will undoubtedly be some students whose schedules do not align with the offered dates and times. This concern is addressed in the Frequently asked questions (FAQs) section. Therefore, although the scheduled dates and times may present conflicts for some, students should be registered for the section that fits most reasonably within their schedule.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH DISABILITY SERVICES

In accordance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, if a student has a disability or thinks he or she may have a disability, the student should contact the Supporting Students through Disability Services (SSDS) office, which is located in the Student Services Center, Suite 110. They can be reached at (757) 823-2014 or (757) 823-8325.

PREPARATION

The EWC Scoring Rubric as well as the EWC Prep Packet have been designed to assist in preparing students for the exam. Both the Rubric and Prep Packet contain vital information about the exam including tips for passing. These documents will be sent, via NSU e-mail addresses, to all registered students during the week prior to their scheduled EWC date. Copies can be obtained at the Assessment Office.

QUESTIONS

Email: EWC@nsu.edu.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE EWC? / WHY DO I HAVE TO TAKE THE EXAM?

The Examination of Writing Competency meets the State Council of Higher Education's requirement for Virginia public colleges and universities to demonstrate student proficiency in written communication. The exam is designed to ensure that students can write competently when they enter their upper-level major courses. The benefits of an exam of this sort are as follows: (i) it protects the reputation of the University for producing graduates who can write competently in their professions and who will

succeed as responsible employees, citizens, and alumni; (ii) it benefits the University faculty by providing data/information for curriculum improvement and faculty/professional development, and (iii) it benefits the University students by providing continued opportunities for them to improve their writing and critical thinking skills.

WHEN SHOULD I TAKE THE EWC?

Students should take the EWC as soon as they have completed their Freshman Composition courses (ENG101 and ENG102); for most students, this will be their sophomore year. Students must take the EWC before they complete 90 hours.

WHERE DO I REGISTER FOR THE EWC?

Students will need to register (or re-register) for the EWC with their department, via Spartan Shield or with the Registrar's Office at least one week prior to each exam administration.

IS THERE A FEE FOR THE EWC?

Currently, there is no fee for the exam.

HOW OFTEN IS THE EXAM OFFERED?

The EWC is offered on scheduled dates and at scheduled times each semester. The exam is offered multiple times each term. Students must take the exam when it is scheduled. Work, family, school or athletic conflicts must be settled by the student so that he or she is free to take the EWC at its scheduled time.

Religious practices, which prohibit activity at the time of the scheduled exam and obligations to the U. S. military at the time of the scheduled exam are the only exceptions to the above policy.

WHO ADMINISTERS THE EWC?

The EWC is administered by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) and is listed in the NSU Catalog as ENG 299.

WHO GRADES THE EWC AND HOW IS IT SCORED?

Graders are recruited from NSU faculty and staff. The Assessment Office provides grader training.

Two graders evaluate each essay. If the two graders disagree about the Pass/No Pass evaluation, a third grader evaluates the essay. This means that at least two graders agree on the final assignment of Pass/No Pass.

Effective Fall 2006, a 5-point rubric is used to evaluate student exams. Students must earn a score of three or above on all criteria to pass the exam.

HOW IS THE EWC ADVERTISED?

The dates and times of the EWC are well publicized at the beginning of each semester; they are published in the Schedule of Classes booklet for each semester and posted all over campus at the beginning of each semester. The exam dates and other exam information will also be listed in the Spartan E-Daily announcements.

In addition, advisors, faculty members, the Registrar's Office, and other administrative offices are supplied with the dates and times of the exams. Information is always available from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO THE EXAM?

Students should bring their NSU ID card, erasable pens, pencils, and a dictionary and/or thesaurus to the exam. Electronic dictionaries/grammar devices and grammar/style guides are NOT allowed at the exam.

HOW SOON WILL I GET MY RESULTS?

At a minimum, Pass/No Pass results are sent to individual students through their NSU e-mail four to six weeks after each exam administration. Results are forwarded to the Registrar's Office and placed on student records at the end of the term in which the exam was offered or as

soon as possible thereafter. However, several factors can inhibit the speed at which student results are recorded. Some of these may be: students taking the exam multiple times in one term, students being registered for several EWC sections during the same term, or students taking the exam on a different date and time than they were originally registered, etc.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I PASS?

The grade is forwarded to the Registrar's Office and will be listed on the student's transcript at the end of the term.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT PASS?

Students are advised to contact the Writing Center or the spartan success center to set up an appointment to review their exams if they do not pass. Students should also attend the writing workshops offered by the writing center.

EWC SCORING RUBRIC

	5 Passing (Superior Competency)	4 Passing (Above Average Competency)	3 Passing (Competency)	2 Not Passing (Developing Competency)	1 Not Passing (Incompetent)
Organization Appropriate use of essay structure (Introduction, Thesis statement, Body paragraphs, Conclusion, Transitional devices, etc.)	Clearly-stated, sophisticated thesis directly addresses the prompt; Introduction establishes the content and purpose; Conclusion effectively recounts and summarizes arguments; Body paragraphs include main points discussed separately and in detail; Effective use of thoughtful transitions that connect ideas.	Clearly-stated thesis addresses the prompt; Introduction begins to establish a foundation for the content and purpose; Conclusion summarizes arguments; Body paragraphs are sound and reinforce structure; Transitions connect ideas.	Generalized thesis addresses the prompt; Simple, but recognizable introduction and conclusion; Adequate incorporation of support for thesis in body paragraphs, though they may obtain some extraneous information; Transitions may be mechanical, but foster coherence.	Thesis is vague or implied, not clear or specific, may simply breach prompt; Introduction and conclusion do not establish purpose or summarize arguments; Body paragraphs are poorly organized, ideas are strung together haphazardly; Ineffective transitions.	No clear or implied thesis statement; No clear introduction or conclusion; Paragraphing is missing, irregular or so frequent that it has no relationship to the essay; Transitions are confusing or absent; Organizational problems make the essay near impossible to understand.
Development & Analysis Appropriate use of central ideas and concrete details that support the thesis and prompt	Arguments effectively address all aspects of the prompt; Relevant, quality details enrich the central theme; Shows clear insight on the part of the writer.	Details are present and support arguments; Arguments are clear and illustrate some awareness of the complexities of the issue being discussed.	Development is basic, ideas are reasonably clear, though they do not help flesh out some of the main arguments presented; Arguments on topic, but may not demonstrate in-depth understanding.	Details may be too broad, narrow or inappropriate; Arguments are unclear or supporting evidence is insufficient, often unnecessarily repetitive.	Supporting information is limited, unclear or not present at all; Thoughts are disconnected and have no discernable point; Essay length is not adequate for development.
Sentence Structure Appropriate use of the construction of complete, complex sentences	Complete sentences are well-built with complex and varied structure; Little to no sentence structure errors such as fragments, run-ons etc.	Sequencing is logical and effective, some sentence variety and use of complex sentence forms; Very few fragments, run-ons etc.	Sequencing shows logic, some sentence variety; Sentences are routine, but effective; A few fragments, run-ons, etc., but not to the point of distraction.	Very little sentence variety, most are structured the same way; Some are awkward, others are fragments, run-ons, etc.	Sequencing is random, most phrases are not sentences at all; Endless conjunctions or a complete lack thereof, which causes mass confusion.
Grammar, Diction & Mechanics Appropriate use of the conventions of grammar such as tense, POV, etc. as well as language usage, punctuation (internal and external), spelling, capitalization, etc.	Little to no grammatical errors (i.e. subject/verb agreement, tense, POV) used effectively and coherently throughout the essay; Language choices enhance meaning and clarify understanding in a precise, interesting way; Near perfect execution of internal and external punctuation, spelling and capitalization (1-3 errors).	A few grammatical errors, but grammar is correctly applied; Attempt at use of varied and advanced language that enhances arguments; Very few external punctuation and a few internal (i.e., comma, semi-colon, etc.) errors; Very few spelling and capitalization errors (3-5 errors).	Problems with grammar are not serious enough to distort meaning, but may not be correctly applied in each instance; Attempts at colorful language apparent, but diction sometimes reaches beyond the scope of the argument; Punctuation sometimes missing or wrong; Some spelling and capitalization errors (5-10 errors).	Numerous grammatical errors that distort meaning in some instances; Language often used in odd ways; Jargon or clichés distract or mislead, redundancy is distracting; Many external and internal punctuation errors as well as numerous errors in spelling and capitalization (10-15 errors).	Frequent grammatical errors distort meaning and hinder communication; Little to no variation in word choice, language is used incorrectly and seriously impairs understanding; Gross errors in punctuation, spelling and capitalization that hinder meaning as well as understanding. (15+ errors).



EWC CRITICAL THINKING (REASON)

In an effort to ensure that the EWC is aligned with Norfolk State University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a new EWC Critical Thinking (R.E.A.S.O.N.) Rubric will be introduced and used in conjunction with the original writing rubric. The critical thinking rubric is designed to benefit faculty and students by specifically outlining how each criterion of the EWC can be linked to critical thinking. Norfolk State University's Quality Enhancement Plan R.E.A.S.O.N.: Creating Coherent Pathways through Critical Thinking—is designed to improve student learning. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) approved NSU's QEP in fall 2008 and a critical thinking plan, R.E.A.S.O.N., was created to help students: **Reflect, Evaluate, Argue, Solve, Obtain, and Network.**

Reflect - Reflection and Interpretation

Reflect on information presented in diverse media and frames of reference to:

- Identify main ideas and/or themes
- Make comparative judgments from data

Evaluate - Analysis and Evaluation

Evaluate assumptions to:

- Determine the validity/ credibility and implications of a supposition
- Identify limitations and contradictions in an event

Argue - Argumentation

Argue to:

- Develop and (self) evaluate arguments and issues
- Express judgments of value, merit, or worth
- Articulate a clear and insightful problem statement

Solve - Problem-Solving

Solve problems in efficient and effective ways by:

- Developing propositions and predicting causal relationships
- Identifying multiple approaches for solving the problem

Obtain - Persistence, Flexibility, and Adaptability / Dealing with Change

Obtain desired goals/outcomes by:

- Implementing and adapting a plan to work towards a goal or conclusion
- Identifying new information that might support or hinder implementation of the plan

Network - Communication / Explanation and Persuasion

Network to:

- Communicate ideas, alternative solutions, implementation plans, and/or desired outcomes in diverse frames of reference and in a variety of media
- Initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others



ESSAY CRITERIA

A passing essay must show competence in each of the following criteria:

1. ORGANIZATION - To what extent does the response exhibit the traditional three-part structure of beginning, middle, and end? To what extent is the response controlled by a single dominant idea, most often the answer to the question? To what extent are the paragraphs or subsections controlled by their central ideas?

2. DEVELOPMENT & ANALYSIS - To what extent do the central ideas and concrete details support the thesis and the writing prompt? To what extent does the response make use of appropriate information and details to support its generalizations? To what extent are the information and details logically linked to the central ideas of the response and the paragraphs or subsections?

3. SENTENCE STRUCTURE - To what extent are sentences complete and well-built? To what extent are sentences varied in structure?

4. GRAMMAR, DICTION & MECHANICS - To what extent does the response display a command of the conventions of usage? To what extent does the response exhibit appropriate vocabulary and sentence variety?

The descriptions above are the products of an effective writing process. Here is some advice about using your writing process to make sure that the essay you write will meet the above criteria.

Remember that an essay has three basic parts—a beginning, middle, and end; in other words, an academic essay has an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Don't let trouble with writing the introductory paragraph bottleneck the rest of your essay. You can always come back and write the introduction after you've finished with the body of the essay. Be sure to revise and edit.

Budget your time: set aside time for reading the question carefully. Read it at least twice, making sure that you understand what your essay needs to be about in order to answer it. If an excerpt of an article, a quotation or chart or graph is included with your question, use those to help get started on your answer, but remember that you're not writing an essay about that excerpt or quotation. Set aside time for generating ideas by thinking and then free writing, clustering, asking questions, or brainstorming on paper. Use these ideas to put together a working outline, and write your essay from this prewriting effort. Don't plan on copying over from a rough draft; in general, three hours isn't enough time to use the writing process in the way you would if you had a few days to write an essay. Finally, set aside enough time to revise and edit your essay; most students need to budget at least 30 minutes for this step.

Revise according to criteria 1, 2, and 3 and your own writing weaknesses:

You won't have a copy of these criteria when you take the exam, so you should have a thorough understanding of what each criterion means in terms of your writing in general and, specifically, your writing for the Examination of Writing Competency (EWC).

Criterion 1 requires that your essay be organized. An effective organization requires a strong thesis statement (the answer to the question in the EWC), body paragraphs which support that thesis statement and which have their own central ideas, and transitional devices wherever needed.

Criterion 2 requires that an essay be thoroughly developed using specific details and examples. Use concrete, specific language wherever possible, and be sure that every generalization in the essay is thoroughly developed. For example, it's not sufficient to write that you think tuition raises should be frozen by the state government. Your reader needs to know why you think that. If one of your reasons is that you think tuition is too high already, you need to be specific: how much, in dollars, you pay right now, what you get for it, what you think you should get for that much money, why you can't afford to pay more than you already do (maybe you support a family and a car already?), what your friend John pays for tuition at a college in North Carolina. There are many specific details that support your opinion and make your point so much stronger than it might be without the details.

Criterion 3 requires that your essay is made up of complete, complex sentences. Good sentence structure means that your essay is free of run-ons and fragments, as these may impair understanding. If you have to read your sentences twice to make sense of them, rewrite them. Use varied sentence structure and sentence length in the body of the essay.

Edit according to Criterion 4 and your own writing weaknesses:

There are specific errors that competent college writers don't make. Below you will find a list of most of those errors; take particular note if any of these are errors you know you tend to make when you write. Most of these errors can be edited and corrected if you budget your time so that you have enough time after you've written your essay to do this. In fact, your writing may well improve if you can learn to write your drafts without worrying about grammar, mechanics, and spelling. To worry about such matters while you write can often distract you from excellent development, sentence structure, and "flow." Whenever possible, write, revise, and edit in that order.

1. Punctuation errors - Know the rules for comma usage and use commas only when and where they are needed. Understand the difference between simple plural noun forms with "s" endings and possessive noun forms with "s" endings. Understand the colon and the semi-colon and how you should use them.

2. Pronoun errors - Understand the importance of being consistently correct in case and agreement as you use pronouns.

3. Point of view - Be consistent. Use "I" if necessary. Avoid "you"; you won't need to address your audience directly unless the question requires you to do so.

4. Verb errors - Understand the necessity of using verbs correctly so that they agree with their subjects and have the appropriate endings.

5. Vocabulary - Understand that the college writer has a wide and varied vocabulary but that you shouldn't use words you don't understand in test situations. Build your vocabulary. Know how to use the vocabulary of your major.

6. Spelling, including homonym errors - Look up any words you don't know how to spell. Don't use a word if you can't figure out how to spell it. Spell correctly those words that appear in the question and any words you must use throughout your essay. Know the rules for homonym use: there/their/they're, where/were, too/to/two. These are easy errors to make but easy errors to edit for and correct.

7. Miscellaneous Errors - "A lot" is two words. "Cannot" is one word. "Affect" is a verb and "effect" is a noun. "Myself" should usually be avoided; replace it with "I" or "me." Don't use an exclamation point for emphasis in academic writing; let your words supply the excitement.

EWC DIRECTIONS

When students take the EWC, they are given a choice of three exam questions as well as a set of directions for writing their essay. These directions are meant to serve as a writing guide and check list for each student. Follow the EWC directions carefully when writing your essay.

DIRECTIONS

Write a well-developed, approximately 500-600 word, academic essay that responds to ONE of the three questions below. Be sure to address the question throughout your essay.

- ▼ Include an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement, body paragraphs with transitions, and a concluding paragraph.
- ▼ Develop your essay with specific details and examples drawn from personal experience or observation, history, literature and/or current events.
- ▼ Read the quotations to stimulate your thinking. You do not have to include or address the quotation in your essay, but you may if you wish. If a quotation is used, make sure to cite it correctly in your essay.
- ▼ The final draft of your essay must be written in ink. However, you may make corrections on your final draft. You may also proofread your essay aloud as long as you do not disturb those around you.

ESSAY 1

SAMPLE OUTLINES AND EWC ESSAYS

The following are examples of successful and unsuccessful EWC essays. The passing essays are by no means perfect and small modifications may have been made to clarify meaning in the essays. However, for the most part, each essay was typed exactly as it was written. ESSAY 1 includes a sample outline and comments based on the EWC Scoring Rubric. ESSAY 2 has a detailed breakdown as well as comments. ESSAYS 3, 4 and 5 all include comments as well.

OUTLINE SAMPLES

In each body paragraph you should: explain your argument, give an example to support your argument and return to the thesis. These three steps should be reflected in your outline. Also, your outline should always begin with your full thesis statement. Make sure your thesis statement is clear and responds to the question. You should return to it throughout your essay and restate it in your conclusion.

A good outline is important because it will help you (1) keep your essay organized and (2) ensure that you include main ideas as well as supporting details. In the outline below, sample sentences help expound upon each of the main steps mentioned above.

BASIC OUTLINE:

Introduction

1. Opening statement(s)
2. Bridging sentence(s)
3. Thesis

Body paragraph 1

1. Transition/Opening sentence
2. Explain argument
3. Give example
4. Return to thesis

Body paragraph 2

1. Transition/Opening sentence
2. Explain argument
3. Give example
4. Return to thesis

Body paragraph 3

1. Transition/Opening sentence
2. Explain argument
3. Give example
4. Return to thesis

Conclusion

1. Transition/Re-state thesis
2. Summarize arguments
3. Closing statement(s)

DETAILED OUTLINE BASED ON AN EWC QUESTION CODE: CODE 1

"A Virginia Beach woman has won \$500,000 from a scratch-off ticket in the Virginia Lottery."

Source: "Beach woman wins \$500,000 with scratch-off ticket." The Virginian-Pilot, March 2010

Question: If you won \$500,000 in the lottery, how would you spend the money? Provide at least three (3) ideas to support your answer.

INTRODUCTION

1. **Give opening statement(s)** – Everyone seems to be in need of extra money these days. I, for one, could use some extra cash.
2. **Create bridging sentence(s) for the thesis** – There are many things I would do with the money, if I had the privilege of winning the lottery.
3. **Thesis statement** - If I won \$500,000 in the lottery, I would help people in need, invest in education and invest some of the money.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1

1. **Use a transition/Opening sentence** – First, giving back is very important, so I would help others in need by donating some of the money if I won the lottery.
2. **Thoroughly explain the main argument** - My old high school is in desperate need of repairs and supplies. If I donated money to them, this could help the students to succeed.
3. **Give a specific example to support this argument** - For example, I went to Jones High School in Belize. In my country, there is not a lot of money put into education. My high school was small but [sic] there still weren't enough supplies for each student. I would take \$100,000 of the money I won in the lot-

tery and buy computers for my old high school in Belize. I would want each student to have their [sic] very own laptop. Having personal laptops would help students complete homework assignments on time and help them work with new technology. By giving my old high school laptops, I would be invest [sic] in the future of my country and in each student.

4. Tie the main argument back to the thesis - Therefore, if I won a large sum in the lottery, I would take a portion of the money and help people in need because helping underprivileged students is a great way to invest in the future.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2

1. **Use a transition/Opening sentence** – Second, if I won the lottery, I would invest in my education.
2. **Thoroughly explain the main argument** – I would use a small portion of my winnings to help me get my master's degree. I want to get a Master's degree in Social Work because I am interested in helping those around me. I think Social Work is a field that gives people the opportunity to change lives.
3. **Give a specific example to support this argument** - For instance, when I was seven-years-old, I was assigned a social worker named Ms. Janet Brown. I came from a home with lots of violence and my parents lost the privilege of raising me. When I went to a foster home, Ms. Brown explained the situation to me and helped me get used to my new surroundings. All while we were in contact, I could tell that she cared about me as a person and didn't treat me like something was wrong with me just because my home life was different from that of others.
4. **Tie the main argument back to the thesis** – Moreover, because I want to be a social worker, if I won the lottery, I would use some of my money to obtain my master's degree.

BODY PARAGRAPH 3

1. **Use a transition/Opening sentence** – Third, if I won the lottery, I would invest some of the money.
2. **Thoroughly explain the main argument** – I am not only interested in investing in stocks and bonds, as some people are, but I'm also interested in investing in my own family.
3. **Give a specific example to support this argument** – An example of this would be starting a savings account for my son.

I only have one child and I want to start planning right away for his future. Though my son is only nine months old, I want to make sure he knows that I was always thinking about a way to send him to college. If I start a savings account in his name using some of the lottery winnings, I will set him up for success in the future. I can even buy savings bonds that he has to wait until he is 18 to cash in.

4. Tie the main argument back to the thesis – Furthermore, if I won the lottery, I'd like to invest in my family by starting a savings account for my son.

CONCLUSION

1. Use a transition/Re-state thesis – All in all, if I won \$500,000 in the lottery, I would help people in need, invest in education and invest some of the money.

2. Summarize all main arguments – The first thing I'd do if I won the lottery would be to give back to my old high school. I would buy equipment, so that the students would have the newest technology. The next thing I'd do if I won the lottery would be to invest in my own education by putting money towards my master's degree. I want to be ahead of the pack in the professional world and getting a master's degree would help me to succeed. The last thing I'd do if I won the lottery would be to open a savings account or buy some bonds for my son. I think investing in the family in [sic] just as important as investing in yourself.

3. Give closing statement(s) – Winning the lottery would be great, but I will continue to work hard and save money for my future just in case I don't ever get that winning ticket.

EWC ESSAY BASED ON OUTLINE:

Everyone seems to be in need of extra money these days. I, for one, could use some extra cash. There are many things I would do with the money, if I had the privilege of winning the lottery. If I won \$500,000 in the lottery, I would help people in need, invest in education and invest some of the money.

First, giving back is very important, so I would help others in need by donating some of the money if I won the lottery. My

old high school is in desperate need of repairs and supplies. If I donated money to them, this could help the students to succeed. For example, I went to Jones High School in Belize. In my country, there is not a lot of money put into education. My high school was small but there still weren't enough supplies for each student. I would take \$100,000 of the money I won in the lottery and buy computers for my old high school in Belize. I would want each student to have their very own laptop. Having personal laptops would help students complete homework assignments on time and help them work with new technology. By giving my old high school laptops, I would be investing in the future of my country and in each student. Therefore, if I won a large sum in the lottery, I would take a portion of the money and help people in need because helping underprivileged students is a great way to invest in the future.

Second, if I won the lottery, I would invest in my education. I would use a small portion of my winnings to help me get my master's degree. I want to get a Master's degree in Social Work because I am interested in helping those around me. I think Social Work is a field that gives people the opportunity to change lives. For instance, when I was seven-years-old, I was assigned a social worker named Ms. Janet Brown. I came from a home with lots of violence and my parents lost the privilege of raising me. When I went to a foster home, Ms. Brown explained the situation to me and helped me get used to my new surroundings. All while we were in contact, I could tell that she cared about me as a person and didn't treat me like something was wrong with me just because my home life was different from that of others. Moreover, because I want to be a social worker, if I won the lottery, I would use some of my money to obtain my master's degree.

Third, if I won the lottery, I would invest some of the money. I am not only interested in investing in stocks and bonds, as some people are, but I'm also interested in investing in my own family. An example of this would be starting a savings account for my son. I only have one child and I want to start planning right

away for his future. Though my son is only nine months old, I want to make sure he knows that I was always thinking about a way to send him to college. If I start a savings account in his name using some of the lottery winnings, I will set him up for success in the future. I can even buy savings bonds that he has to wait until he is 18 to cash in. Furthermore, if I won the lottery, I'd like to invest in my family by starting a savings account for my son.

All in all, if I won \$500,000 in the lottery, I would help people in need, invest in education and invest some of the money. The first thing I'd do if I won the lottery would be to give back to my old high school. I would buy equipment, so that the students would have the newest technology. The next thing I'd do if I won the lottery would be to invest in my own education by putting money towards my master's degree. I want to be ahead of the pack in the professional world and getting a master's degree would help me to succeed. The last thing I'd do if I won the lottery would be to open a savings account or buy some bonds for my son. I think investing in the family is just as important as investing in yourself. Winning the lottery would be great, but I will continue to work hard and save money for my future just in case I don't ever get that winning ticket.

Word count: 768

COMMENTS ON ESSAY 1

This is a **PASSING** essay and most frequently falls into the "Superior Competency" category:

Organization - Clearly-stated, sophisticated thesis directly addresses the prompt; introduction establishes the content and purpose; conclusion effectively recounts and summarizes arguments; body paragraphs include main points discussed separately and in detail; effective use of thoughtful transitions that connect ideas.

Development & Analysis - Arguments effectively address all aspects of the prompt; relevant, quality details enrich the central theme; shows clear insight on the part of the writer.

Sentence Structure - Complete sentences are well-built with complex and varied structure; little to no sentence structure errors such as fragments, run-ons etc.

Grammar, Diction & Mechanics - Little to no grammatical errors (i.e. subject/verb agreement, tense, POV) used effectively and coherently throughout the essay; language choices enhance meaning and clarify understanding in a precise, interesting way; near perfect execution of internal and external punctuation, spelling and capitalization (1-3 errors).

ESSAY 1 Pros:

- Clearly-stated thesis
- Well-developed body paragraphs
- Good use of commas/punctuation/tense
- Transitional statements used throughout
- Conclusion has summarized arguments and re-stated thesis

ESSAY 2

QUESTION CODE 01

"The National Museum of African American History and Culture should be built on the Mall near the Washington Monument, the Smithsonian's Board of Regents decided yesterday...Backers of the museum hope it will open by 2016."

from Mall Site Is Chosen for Black History Museum, The Washington Post, January 2006

Question: Discuss at least three (3) major events/people that should be included in the National Museum of African American History and Culture that will eventually be added to the Smithsonian and explain why they should be included.

The three people who should be included in the National Museum of African American History and Culture are Martin Luther King, Jr., Bill Cosby and Oprah Winfrey. These three African Americans are some of the most recognizable and influential people of the twenty-first century. I believe they are owed recognition in the National Museum for their contributions to African Americans and to humanity for the following reasons.

First, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spearheaded the Civil Rights era with an ideology and approach that seemed to mirror Mahatma Gandhi's view. The idea was nonviolent resistance to the laws and hardships that plagued African Americans in the nineteen-sixties. Dr. King's approach was more successful than his contemporaries, because his message was not rooted in hate or retribution. Instead, his message preached forgiveness and understanding. Dr. King's courage led the people of the Civil Rights era to inevitable victory, but at the cost of his own life. Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered before his dream was realized and, for this reason above all, he should be given a place of honor at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

In addition to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bill Cosby is a person who has contributed a great deal to the recognition of African American culture and to the enrichment of all mankind. Bill Cosby began his career in the nineteen-sixties as a comedian

and later worked as a television celebrity. However, Bill Cosby would later become a philanthropist whose mission was to help all of mankind. In the nineteen-eighties, Bill Cosby wrote a series of books on parenting that revolutionized the way parents treat their children. Mr. Cosby has also championed various issues from Civil Rights to education. Recently, Bill Cosby went to New Orleans to battle the scandal surrounding the elections in that city. After all the philanthropic efforts Mr. Cosby has made, he definitely belongs in the National Museum of African American Culture.

Furthermore, another candidate that deserves recognition is in the National Museum for African American History and Culture Oprah Winfrey. Mrs. Winfrey began as a television personality at a small news station in New York. She would later become one of the most recognizable African American females in the world. Oprah Winfrey accomplished this by using her television show to promote the discussion of sensitive and controversial issues such as sexual harassment, politics, affirmative action and healthcare. Oprah Winfrey gained the respect of the whole nation when she talked about her own sexual assault as a child. As a result of Oprah's own courage, many other people can talk about their problems. Oprah has also championed various causes to serve humanity. She recently did a television show on childhood obesity and its impact on adulthood diseases. Clearly for these reasons, Oprah Winfrey should be inducted into the National Museum for African American History and Culture.

In conclusion, these three icons should be rewarded for their contributions to African American culture and humanity. Very few people influence the world about African Americans like these three people. The courage these people, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bill Cosby and Oprah Winfrey, showed and the hardships they faced should guarantee them a place of honor in the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Word count: 523

COMMENTS ON ESSAY 2

This is a PASSING essay and most frequently falls into the "Above Average Competency" category:

Organization - Clearly-stated, thesis addresses the prompt; introduction begins to establish a foundation for the content and purpose; conclusion summarizes arguments; body paragraphs are sound and reinforce structure; transitions connect ideas.

Development & Analysis - Details are present and support arguments; arguments are clear and illustrate some awareness of the complexities of the issue being discussed.

Sentence Structure - Sequencing is logical and effective, some sentence variety and use of complex sentence forms; very few fragments, run-ons etc.

Grammar, Diction & Mechanics - A few grammatical errors, but grammar is correctly applied; attempt at use of varied and advanced language that enhances arguments; very few external punctuation and a few internal (i.e., comma, semi-colon, etc.) errors; very few spelling and capitalization errors (3-5 errors).

ESSAY 2 Pros:

- Clear, appropriate thesis statement
- Many concrete details
- Transitional phrases/statements used in each paragraph
- Conclusion re-states thesis

ESSAY 2 Cons:

- A few sentence structure errors
- Some unnecessary repetition of words or word phrases

ESSAY 2 BREAKDOWN

Introduction with thesis statement: The three people who should be included in the National Museum of African American History and Culture are Martin Luther King, Jr., Bill Cosby and Oprah Winfrey. These three African Americans are some of the most recognizable and influential people of the twenty-first century. I

believe they are owed recognition in the National Museum for their contributions to African Americans and to humanity for the following reasons.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1

Topic Sentence with transitional phrase: First, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spearheaded the Civil Rights era with an ideology and approach that seemed to mirror Mahatma Gandhi's view.

Argument/Explanation: The idea was nonviolent resistance to the laws and hardships that plagued African Americans in the nineteen- sixties. Dr. King's approach was more successful than his contemporaries, because his message was not rooted in hate or retribution.

Development/Details: Instead, his message preached forgiveness and understanding. Dr. King's courage led the people of the Civil Rights era to inevitable victory, but at the cost of his own life.

Return to main idea: Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered before his dream was realized and, for this reason above all, he should be given a place of honor at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2

Topic Sentence with transitional phrase: In addition to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bill Cosby is a person who has contributed a great deal to the recognition of African American culture and to the enrichment of all mankind.

Argument/Explanation: Bill Cosby began his career in the nineteen-sixties as a comedian and later worked as a television celebrity. However, Bill Cosby would later become a philanthropist whose mission was to help all of mankind.

Development/Details: In the nineteen-eighties, Bill Cosby wrote a series of books on parenting that revolutionized the way parents treat their children. Mr. Cosby has also championed various issues from Civil Rights to education. Recently, Bill Cosby went to New Orleans to battle the scandal surrounding the elections in that city.

Return to main idea: After all the philanthropic efforts Mr. Cosby has made, he definitely belongs in the National Museum of African American Culture.

BODY PARAGRAPH 3

Topic Sentence with transitional phrase: Furthermore, another candidate that deserves recognition is in the National Museum for African American History and Culture Oprah Winfrey.

Argument/Explanation: Mrs. Winfrey began as a television personality at a small news station in New York. She would later become one of the most recognizable African American females in the world. Oprah Winfrey accomplished this by using her television show to promote the discussion of sensitive and controversial issues such as sexual harassment, politics, affirmative action and healthcare.

Development/Details: Oprah Winfrey gained the respect of the whole nation when she talked about her own sexual assault as a child. As a result of Oprah's own courage, many other people can talk about their problems. Oprah has also championed various causes to serve humanity. She recently did a television show on childhood obesity and its impact on adulthood diseases.

Return to main idea: Clearly for these reasons, Oprah Winfrey should be inducted into the National Museum for African American History and Culture.

Conclusion with re-stated thesis: In conclusion, these three icons should be rewarded for their contributions to African American culture and humanity. Very few people influence the world about African Americans like these three people. The courage these people, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bill Cosby and Oprah Winfrey, showed and the hardships they faced should guarantee them a place of honor in the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

ESSAY 3

QUESTION CODE 03

"Students entering Norfolk State University seeking the baccalaureate degree are required to take forty semester hours from the general education core curriculum consisting of Digital, Computer and Telecommunications; Communications; Humanities; Social Sciences; Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Health and Physical Education; and Cultural Electives."

from Norfolk State University 2002-2004 University Catalog

Question: In what ways have you benefited from the required general education courses that you have taken while a student here at Norfolk State University?

Although my main goal in coming to Norfolk State University was to obtain a baccalaureate degree in Computer Science with engineering emphasis, I never knew I would benefit so much from the general education core curriculum courses offered on campus. My benefits can be categorized into five groups based on the required general education courses. These include Humanities benefits, Health and Physical Education benefits, Mathematics benefits, communications benefits, and Natural Sciences benefits.

Taking Humanities 210 and 211, gave me more knowledge in three different areas. These were history, culture, and religion. Although I was born in Africa, I never knew Africa was the second largest continent in the world until I studied the history of in my Humanities 210 class. I also did not know that Africa had on of the earliest civilization until I heard about that in a presentation given in class. The earliest civilization was in the Mesopotemia region in Northern Africa. From my Humanities 210 and 211 class, I have been able to understand why certain people live differently from other people in different parts of the world. This became clear to me after studying different cultures in different regions in the world. From Humanities 211, I have been able to learn the other regions in some knowledge about other peoples religion. Some of these religion includes Buddhism and Huiduism from India, and Islam and Zoroastranism from Persia. Now to my Health and Physical Education benefits.

Health and Physical Education classes have helped me stay relaxed and also reduce a lot of my school stress. From this class or course, I have been able to create my own exercise program that helped me stay fit all year round. Last year. After taking PED-100, I have been able to exercise all parts of my body. I have also learned how to lift weights properly to strengthen my biceps and triceps.

My Mathematics benefits includes: gaining experience in the use of some computer application software such as MATLAB, MINITAB, EXCEL, etc, analyzing data, drawing graphs from a given equation, and wming up with solutions to a given problem. All of these benefits were obtained from taking MTH-

153 which involves data analysis and translation of data into graphs, and MTH-384 which involves finding a general solution to a given problem.

My other benefit category can be found in my communication courses which includes ENG-101 and ENG -102 has helped improve my writing strategy for essays, laboratory reports, and even my research papers. In ENG-101, I learned a lot from the five-minute paragraph drills that were given in class. This helped me to come up with good, if not the best essays, by always remembering to have a topic sentence, followed by main points and examples or elaboration of points, and a conclusion.

Finally, with my Natural Sciences courses, I have been able to classify solutions or mixtures into homogeneous or heterogeneous mixtures, based on their appearance. In CHM – 221 lab, I learned that, if a mixture appears to have a uniform composition, then that will be classified as a homogeneous mixture and mixture that forms two distinct layers or the substances involved in a mixture. In this same lab, I have learned how to separate the substances involved in a mixture. When a heterogeneous mixture involving two distinct layers of substance, the decanting method should be used to separate the substance. If the heterogeneous mixture has visible substances involving a solid and a liquid, then the filtration method will be used to separate the substances. Also from my labs, I found out that homogeneous mixtures can be separated by means of evaporation. Not only have I benefited from my Natural Sciences by being able to classify and separate mixtures but also, I have been able to determine what a person's weight would be on different planets. This was made possible to me when I took PHY-152 and found out that, a person's weight actually depends on the force of gravity acting on that person. Since the force of gravity varies from one planet to the other, it came to me that a person weighing 100 pounds on earth will not have the same weight when he or she goes to planet mars.

From the above paragraphs, it is quite obvious that I have nicely benefited from the required general education courses that I have taken while a student here at Norfolk State University.

Word Count: 735

COMMENTS ON ESSAY 3

This is a **PASSING** essay and most frequently falls into the "Competency" category:

Organization - Generalized thesis addresses the prompt; simple, but recognizable introduction and conclusion; adequate incorporation of support for thesis in body paragraphs, though they may obtain some extraneous information; transitions may be mechanical, but foster coherence.

Development & Analysis - Development is basic, ideas are reasonably clear, though they do not help flesh out some of the main arguments presented; arguments on topic, but may not demonstrate in-depth understanding.

Sentence Structure - Sequencing shows logic, some sentence variety; sentences are routine, but effective; a few fragments, run-ons, etc., but not to the point of distraction.

Grammar, Diction & Mechanics - Problems with grammar are not serious enough to distort meaning, but may not be correctly applied in each instance; attempts at colorful language apparent, but diction sometimes reaches beyond the scope of the argument; punctuation sometimes missing or wrong; some spelling and capitalization errors (5-10 errors).

ESSAY 3 Pros:

- Generalized thesis statement
- Concrete details
- Good organization

ESSAY 3 Cons:

- Covers a multitude of subjects sparsely, instead of focusing on just a few
- Several sentence structure errors, including a number of fragments
- Some problems with grammar and mechanics
- Conclusion is simply a sentence, not a full paragraph

ESSAY 4

QUESTION CODE 03

"When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but we often look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us." Helen Keller
from "Odes to Joy" in Time, January 17, 2005

Question: Do you agree with Helen Keller that people often ignore the opportunity to be happy in the present because they waste their time being miserable about the past?

In this day, and age happiness is nowhere near. Ignoring the opportunity to be happy in the present is very easily done. The past holds a lot of people back from happiness feels. Disbelief about happiness makes you a one minded person. When you're always experiencing miserable sometimes you become a cold person. It's much easier to brace yourself for bad times. Everyone, have bad times but everyone can't look past them. Majority of the time you have to find happiness within yourself. If you just sitting around waiting for happiness it will never come. When the doors of happiness open you have to look forward. The past is in the past for a reason. Everyone have bad times but you have to keep your eye on the prize.

Personally, happiness is always a good feeling. It's hard to forget miserable times, but a good moment comes once in a blue moon. Take advantage of happiness when it finally arrives. I, believe on Karma so if you're experiencing bad times you have done miserable things. Sometimes, I don't want to open the door of happiness, because negativity is right around the corner. A lot of times you have to just walk into the next door of happiness. The past is a learning experience not a resting place. You have to move passed the miserable times to make you a stronger person. There is nothing you can do about the past that's why it's considered the past. You have to go through bad times in order to see the good ones. Feeling miserable get's you nowhere, but happiness can get you to many places.

Many people waste their time on trying to change the past. People sometimes don't have control over the situation, but they feel as though they do. You live for good days, and bad ones. It's hard to move on, but it will benefit you in the end. Especially, when life has dealt you a bad hand.

Although, happiness is not right on your fingertips keep hope alive. Looking for negativity it will appear when you least expect it. Stride for all doors of happiness and good things will come from it. You should never think that happiness is not for you. Living the present is the best thing to do. Leave the past in the past don't look back. If you keep looking back you will end up with the same results. You have on life so make sure you life the best life ever.

Word Count: 418

COMMENTS ON ESSAY 4

This is not a passing essay and most frequently falls into the "Developing Competency" category:

Organization - Thesis is vague or implied, not clear or specific, may simply breach prompt; introduction and conclusion do not establish purpose or summarize arguments; body paragraphs are poorly organized, ideas are strung together haphazardly; ineffective transitions.

Development & Analysis - Details may be too broad, narrow or inappropriate; arguments are unclear or supporting evidence is insufficient, often unnecessarily repetitious.

Sentence Structure - Very little sentence variety, most are structured the same way; some are awkward, others are fragments, run-ons, etc.

Grammar, Diction & Mechanics - Numerous grammatical errors that distort meaning in some instances; language often used in odd ways; jargon or clichés distract or mislead, redundancy is distracting; many external and internal punctuation errors as well as numerous errors in spelling and capitalization (10-15 errors).

ESSAY 4 Pros:

- Uses indentation and paragraphing
- Begins to address the prompt

ESSAY 4 Cons:

- Only has an implied thesis
- No concrete details; philosophical, but has no real substance
- Many awkward phrases and misspelled words
- Odd sentence structure, many sentences are fragments
- Many problems with grammar, diction and mechanics

ESSAY 5

QUESTION CODE 03

"When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but we often look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us." Helen Keller
from "Odes to Joy" in Time, January 17, 2005

Question: Do you agree with Helen Keller that people often ignore the opportunity to be happy in the present because they waste their time being miserable about the past?

I believe this statement to be true. I also see it as a metaphor for more than just said. I think it boils down to appreciation. I say this for many reasons. We as a country take things for granted. This subject can get so in-depth, that it can even involve the recent tragedy in our country just 4 years ago. I use this example for the single fact that 9/11 could have been a lot worse. Of course it was a tragedy, but we have to be grateful that other major cities weren't hit, we have to be grateful that the white house wasn't hit, we have to be grateful that many children weren't hurt. These are things that we forget to consider, just to name a few. But it's not our fault, it's simply human behavior. Another subject that can raise this topic would be "Poverty". We as Americans consider poverty a major issue, and it is. But we must look at our counterparts. They are a reflection on how blessed we are. I say this because in other countries, their poverty level is depressing. The families over there sometimes don't even have shelter. They sleep on dirt and walk around with no shoes on as if it was a daily routine. They are faced with disease infested environments and low income jobs. We as Americans wouldn't be caught dead doing manual labor for less than \$5.50 an hour. Don't get me wrong, we do have poverty, but not to the level they're on. The closest thing I can think of, to somewhat, be close to that would be our "projects" or government funded houses. At least the majority of Americans has housing. It might not be the best furnished, but it's a roof over their heads. I believe the average American wouldn't last a week, living in another country's poverty. So the question is....are Americans spoiled from lack of appreciation? Do Americans often ignore the opportunity to be happy in the present because we waste our time being miserable in

the past? I say yes! We as a country tend to ignore opportunity when it knocks on our door. I will use "Our" problem with Iraq. We have had an ongoing dispute with Iraq for many years now. Because of things that happened in the past, we are forced to see loved ones to be injured and killed, just for something that happened in the past, we are forced to see loved ones to be injured and killed, just for something that happened many years ago. Here's where the opportunity to be happy comes in. While our soldiers are over there, fighting "Another" man's war, over here the rich are getting richer. The more wars we have, the more money "America" gets. I guess this is the time to get happy, if you're one of the rich getting richer, that is. They have nothing to lose. They don't have family members over there fighting. I'm almost sure that anyone remotely close to the president won't go to the war. Why? Because if someone close to the president was to get hurt, that wouldn't exactly be a "Happy Opportunity".

Me, I love this country, it has a lot of flaws but what country doesn't. I'm glad I have the opportunity to get financial aid. So I can go to school, so I can have the opportunity to make a better life for the ones I care about. I'm excited that I have the opportunity to be happy now, thanks to the ones who were miserable in the past. So do I think Helen Keller's Statement is true, well I'll just say that "Avoid what made you miserable in the past, so you'll have the opportunity to be happy in the present"

Word count: 634

COMMENTS ON ESSAY 5

This is not a passing essay and most frequently falls into the "Incompetence" category:

Organization - No clear or implied thesis statement; no clear introduction or conclusion; paragraphing is missing, irregular or so frequent that it has no relationship to the essay; transitions are confusing or absent; organizational problems make the essay near impossible to understand.

Development & Analysis - Supporting information is limited, unclear or not present at all; thoughts are disconnected and have no discernable point; essay length is not adequate for development.

Sentence Structure - Sequencing is random, most phrases are not sentences at all; endless conjunctions or a complete lack thereof, which causes mass confusion.

Grammar, Diction & Mechanics - Frequent grammatical errors distort meaning and hinder communication; little to no variation in word choice, language is used incorrectly and seriously impairs understanding; gross errors in punctuation, spelling and capitalization that hinder meaning as well as understanding. (15+ errors).

ESSAY 5 Cons:

- No paragraphs or indentation
- No thesis statement
- Question/prompt not identified or clearly addressed
- No concrete details that support the question/prompt
- Frequent use of awkward phrasing and misspelled words
- Odd sentence structure, many sentences are fragments and/or run-ons
- Several problems with grammar, diction and mechanics



WRITING/PROOFREADING TIPS

HOW TO WRITE A THESIS STATEMENT

What is a Thesis Statement?

Almost all of us—even if we don't do it consciously—look early in an essay for a one- or two-sentence condensation of the argument or analysis that is to follow. We refer to that condensation as a thesis statement.

Why Should Your Essay Contain A Thesis Statement?

- to test your ideas by distilling them into a sentence or two
- to better organize and develop your argument
- to provide your reader with a “guide” to your argument

In general, your thesis statement will accomplish these goals if you think of the thesis as the answer to the question your paper explores.

HOW TO GENERATE A THESIS STATEMENT IF THE TOPIC IS ASSIGNED.

Almost all assignments, no matter how complicated, can be reduced to a single question. Your first step, then, is to distill the assignment into a specific question. For example, if your assignment is “Write a report to the local school board explaining the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class,” turn the request into a question like “What are the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class?” After you've chosen the question your essay will answer, compose one or two complete sentences answering that question.

Q: "What are the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class?"

A: "The potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class are"

OR

A: "Using computers in a fourth-grade class promises to improve"

The answer to the question is the thesis statement for the essay.

HOW TO TELL A STRONG THESIS SENTENCE FROM A WEAK ONE.

1. A strong thesis takes some sort of stand.

Remember that your thesis needs to show your conclusions about a subject. For example, if you are writing a paper for a class on fitness, you might be asked to choose a popular weight-loss product to evaluate. Here are two thesis statements:

There are some negative and positive aspects to the Banana Herb Tea Supplement.

This is a weak thesis. First, it fails to take a stand. Second, the phrase "negative and positive aspects" is vague.

Because Banana Herb Tea Supplement promotes rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, it poses a potential danger to customers.

This is a strong thesis because it takes a stand.

2. A strong thesis justifies discussion.

Your thesis should indicate the point of the discussion. If your assignment is to write a paper on kinship systems, using your own family as an example, you might come up with either of these two thesis statements:

My family is an extended family.

This is a weak thesis because it states an observation. Your reader won't be able to tell the point of the statement, and will probably stop reading.

While most American families would view consanguineal marriage as a threat to the nuclear family structure, many Iranian families, like my own, believe that these marriages help reinforce kinship ties in an extended family.

This is a strong thesis because it shows how your experience contradicts a widely-accepted view. A good strategy for creating a strong thesis is to show that the topic is controversial. Readers will be interested in reading the rest of the essay to see how you support your point.

3. A strong thesis expresses one main idea.

Readers need to be able to see that your paper has one main idea. If your thesis expresses more than one idea, then you might confuse your readers about the subject of your paper. For example:

Companies need to exploit the marketing potential of the Internet, and web pages can provide both advertising and customer support.

This is a weak thesis statement because the reader can't decide whether the paper is about marketing on the Internet or web pages. To revise the thesis, the relationship between the two ideas needs to become more clear. One way to revise the thesis would be to write:

Because the Internet is filled with tremendous marketing potential, companies should exploit this potential by using web pages that offer both advertising and customer support.

This is a strong thesis because it shows that the two ideas are related. Hint: a great many clear and engaging thesis statements contain words like "because," "since," "so," "although," "unless," and "however."

4. A strong thesis statement is specific.

A thesis statement should show exactly what your paper will be about and will help you keep your paper manageable. For example, if you write a paper on hunger, you might say:

World hunger has many causes and effects.

This is a weak thesis statement for two major reasons. First, "world hunger" can't be discussed thoroughly in five or ten pages. Second, "many causes and effects" is vague. You should be able to identify specific causes and effects. A revised thesis might look like this:

Hunger persists in Appalachia because jobs are scarce and farming in the infertile soil is rarely profitable.

This is a strong thesis because it narrows the subject to a more specific and manageable topic and it identifies the specific causes for the existence of hunger.

*Produced by Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University,
Bloomington, IN*

THE PARTS OF AN ESSAY AND THEIR FUNCTIONS:

- A thesis statement is a sentence that tells what you think about the topic of your essay. Your thesis statement should be a sentence that will prompt a response in a reader, or cause him/her to ask "why?" Your thesis should also be a statement that contains the gist of your point of view on the subject you are going to write about.
 - Generally, a thesis statement will appear in the introduction to the essay, which is the first paragraph or section of the essay introducing your topic. Aim for a clear, strong introduction that sets out what you're going to say. Your introduction should be mainly the "explaining" part of your paper. You should be aiming to present your idea in the introduction (whatever it is, agreeing with an idea or disagreeing), and then explain how it generally works. You don't want to get into specifics yet; you just want to establish the direction of your essay
 - Support for your thesis will appear in the body of the essay, which is the "illustrating" part of your paper. In the body, you want to show how you know what you say you know, and to do this you are going to use examples. You should be as specific as possible. Give several carefully-chosen examples, or if you have few, provide very detailed accounts of them. If your examples are well-described, it will be clear to the reader that you have excellent reasons for believing as you do; thus you will have shown how you know what you say you know.
 - The essay will end with a conclusion, where you will "wrap up." In your conclusion, you are trying to show how what you have described and discussed is generally valid.
- Edit out anything in your paper that seems to be going in a different direction to what you want to say. You don't want to contradict yourself.
 - Make sure there are smooth transitions between parts of your essay. You want each paragraph to follow from the previous one, so your whole essay flows along. There's a simple way to do this: make the last sentence in each paragraph reflect or echo the first sentence in the next. Try practicing this a few times.
 - Watch out for sentence fragments. Where sentences begin with If, Since, Although, When, etc., make sure that they are properly finished. For example, "Although my dog died. My cat is still alive." should be, "Although my dog died, my cat is still alive."
 - Divide up run-on sentences. Where you have two sentences run together, separate them with periods. For example, the sentence, "I go to The College of Staten Island I am thirty-three" should be "I go to The College of Staten Island. I am thirty-three."
 - Separate comma splices. When you have two complete sentences joined only by a comma, this is a comma splice error, as in the sentence, "I had no food for three days, I survived." Find ways to join the sentences in ways that show the relationship between them, such as, "I had no food for three days, but I survived."
 - Be sure that you don't end up with subject and verb disagreement. This happens when the subject and verb are in conflict, such as in the sentence, "The trees is beautiful." There is subject/verb disagreement between the subject (trees) and the verb (is) because where the subject "trees" is plural, the verb "is" is singular. It should read, instead, "the trees (plural) are (plural) beautiful."

Prepared by Professor Catherine Lavender for courses taught in The Department of History, The College of Staten Island of The City University of New York. Send email to lavender@postbox.csi.cuny.edu
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CHECKING THE DRAFT FOR COMPLETENESS AND HIGH QUALITY:

- It is important to learn to edit your work; there are very few good writers who are not also good editors. Plan to spend some time checking your draft.
- Check for clarity; you want to make sure everything you've written sounds like it makes sense and is reasonably correct. You should first read your essay over slowly to yourself (or even aloud) and catch any mistakes you see.



PROOFREAD BACKWARDS.

Begin at the end and work back through the paper paragraph by paragraph or even line by line. This will force you to look at the surface elements rather than the meaning of the paper.

Know your own typical mistakes. Look over papers you have written in the past. Make a list of the errors you make repeatedly.

Proofread for one type of error at a time. If commas are your most frequent problem, go through the paper checking just that one problem. Then proofread again for the next most frequent problem.

PROOFREAD ALOUD.

This will slow you down and you will hear the difference between what you meant to write and what you actually wrote. Try reading backwards, a sentence at a time. This will help you focus on the sentences, rather than getting caught up in the content of your paper.

Read through your paper several times, once looking just at spelling, another time looking just at punctuation, and so on. Again, this can help you focus so you'll do a better job.

Remember that editing isn't just about errors. You want to polish your sentences at this point, making them smooth, interesting, and clear. Watch for very long sentences, since they may be less clear than shorter, more direct sentences. Pay attention to the rhythm of your writing; try to use sentences of varying lengths and patterns. Look for unnecessary phrases, repetition, and awkward spots.

Adapted from: <http://www.ualr.edu/owl/proofreading.htm>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[The OWL at Purdue](#) - Purdue University's Online Writing Lab provides practical [writing resources](#) and instructional materials to assist students with general writing, research and citation, subject specific writing, job search writing, email etiquette and more.

[The Guide to Grammar and Writing](#) - The guide contains digital handouts on grammar and usage, general writing, writing about literature, research and citation, and scores of instructor materials, including presentations and quizzes.

[Writing Resources from the University of North Carolina Greensboro](#) - Grammar and usage handouts from the UNCG Writing Center.

[The St. Martin's Handbook](#) - Companion guide to the seventh edition of The St. Martin's Handbook. Highlights include "[The Top 20: Quick Guides to Troubleshooting Your Writing](#)" and "Essay Exam Advice."

[The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) - A collection of handouts on a number of relevant topics, including writing, citation, and style and sentence level concerns. Prefer videos, visit their [YouTube channel](#).





Norfolk State University

700 Park Avenue, Norfolk VA 23504 USA | NSU Operator: 757-823-8600