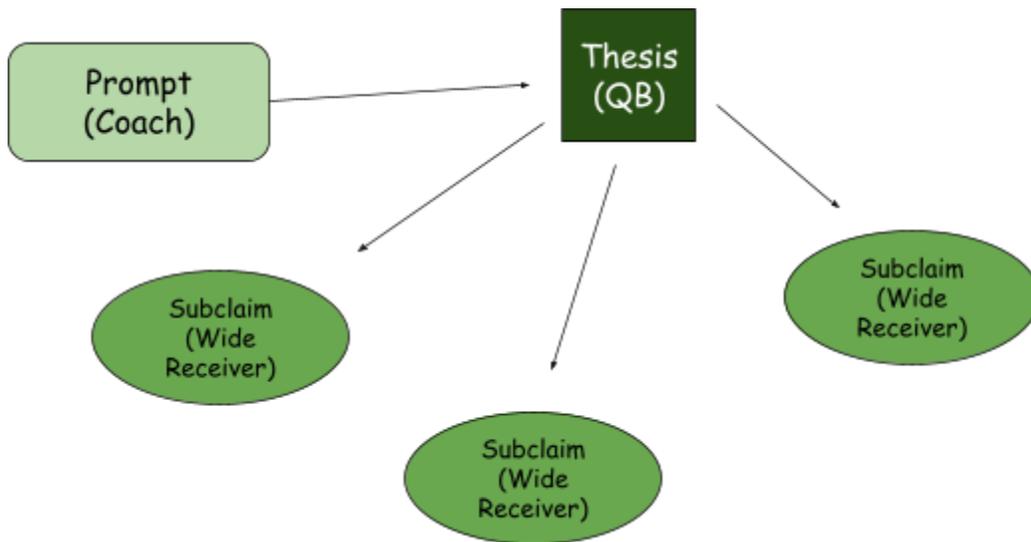


Moorpark College Writing Center's

Essay Playbook



By Jasmine Betka



Grow your Mind

Table of Contents

- How to outline using the SCORE method
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 - S
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Getting started using the SCORE method

S-Simplify

C-Create a brainstorm

O-Outline

R-Revise

E-Expand

Simplify

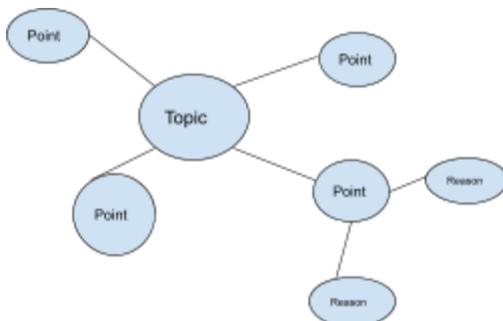
What is the prompt asking?

What tools will you be using to answer this prompt? (i.e. book, outline, research).

Do you have any initial questions about the prompt?

Create a brainstorm

Mind Map



Quick Write

Write everything that comes to mind, don't stop

List

Idea---> related ideas listed out

Idea---> related ideas listed out

Idea---> related ideas listed out

Thesis Map

Outline

Your starting outline does not need to be complete or perfect. It is meant to organize your thoughts and find areas that may need strengthening.

Working thesis:

Subclaim 1:

Evidence
Analysis

Evidence
Analysis

Subclaim 2:

Evidence
Analysis

Evidence
Analysis

Revise

Check that your subclaims all agree
Do your main points align with your thesis?
Did you answer the prompt?
How is the order of your ideas?

Expand

Finish finding your evidence and keep track of it!
Push for deeper analysis
Any other details to expand on?

S

Simplify checklist:

- What is the prompt asking?

- What is my initial response to the prompt?

- What will I need to answer this prompt?

- Primary Source

- Secondary Source

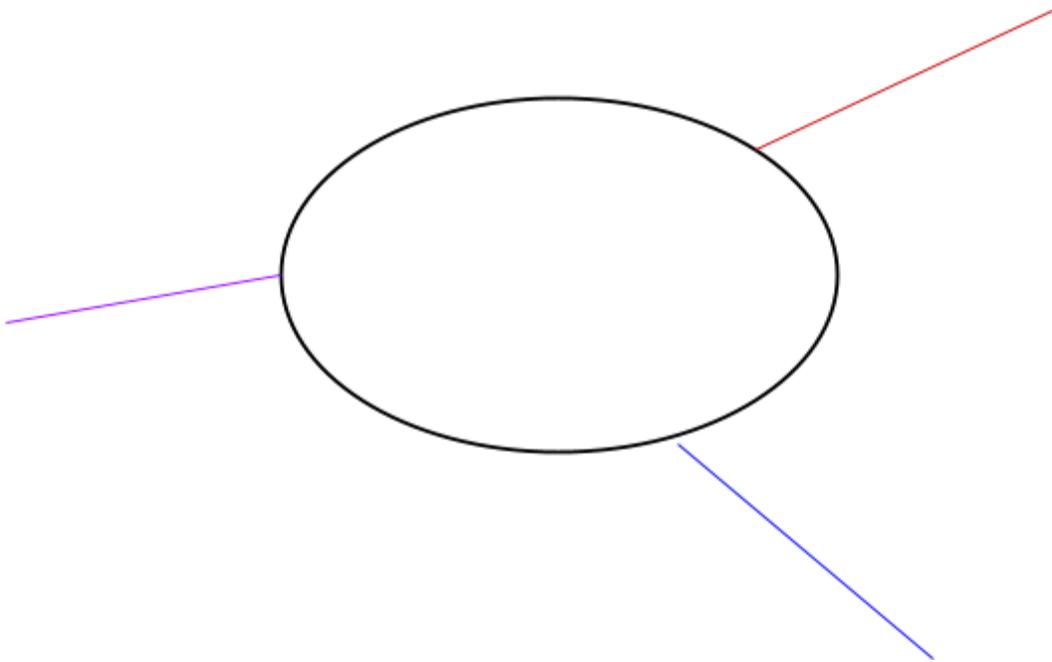
- How many? ____

- Any questions regarding the prompt?

C

Creating a brainstorm:

Mind Map



Free Write Below:

List:

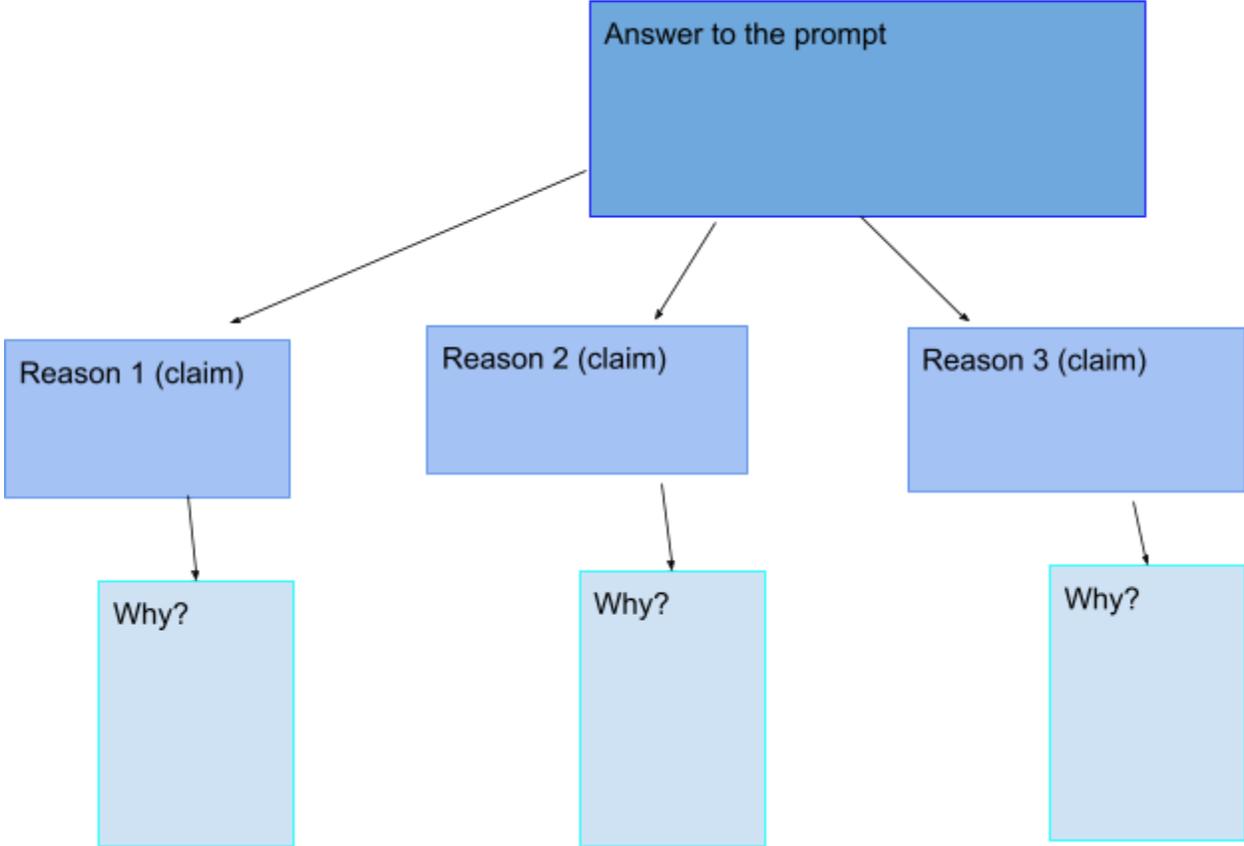
Idea 1:

Idea 2:

Idea 3:

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Thesis Map:



O

Starting Outline:

Working Thesis:

Subclaim 1 (Sub-point to you thesis):

How can you prove/support this?

Subclaim 2 (Sub-point to you thesis):

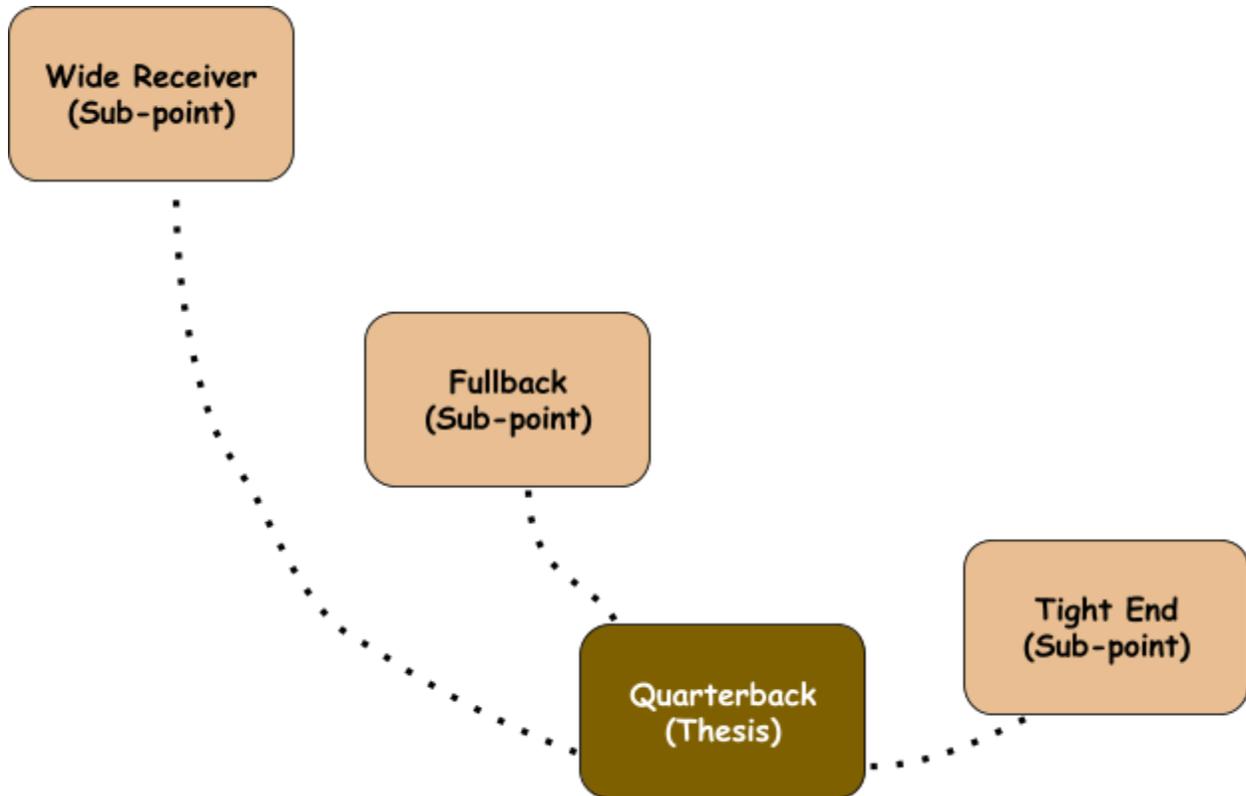
How can you prove/support this?

Subclaim 3 (Sub-point to you thesis):

How can you prove/support this?

Sub-point/Subclaim

What are sub-points?

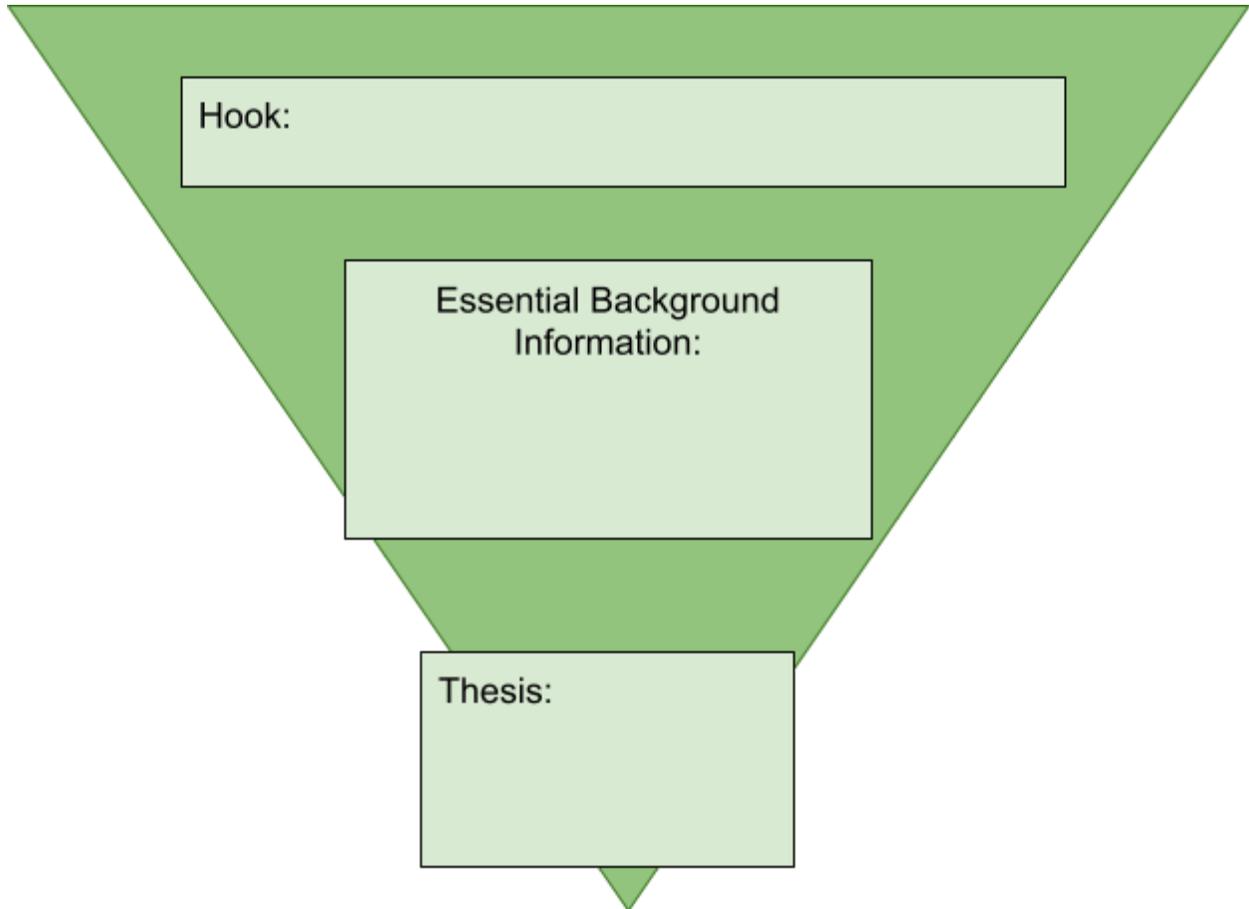


Sub-points support your thesis just like players support the quarterback.

Your thesis controls the direction of your paper just as the quarterback controls the plays on the field. However, without other offensive players, the quarterback would have no support. In an essay, all of the main supporting topics are equivalent to how each player has a position that supports the play that the quarterback is directing.

Complete Outline:

Introduction:



Body Paragraph:

Topic Sentence: This is the main point of the paragraph, relates to the thesis, and includes the claim.

Evidence: Details/quotes from the book, an outside source, facts, ect.

Analysis: How does this evidence prove your point or answer the prompt? Why does this matter?

Repeat 2-3 times

Transition Sentence: How do you take the reader from this idea to the next idea?

Topic Sentence:

Evidence:

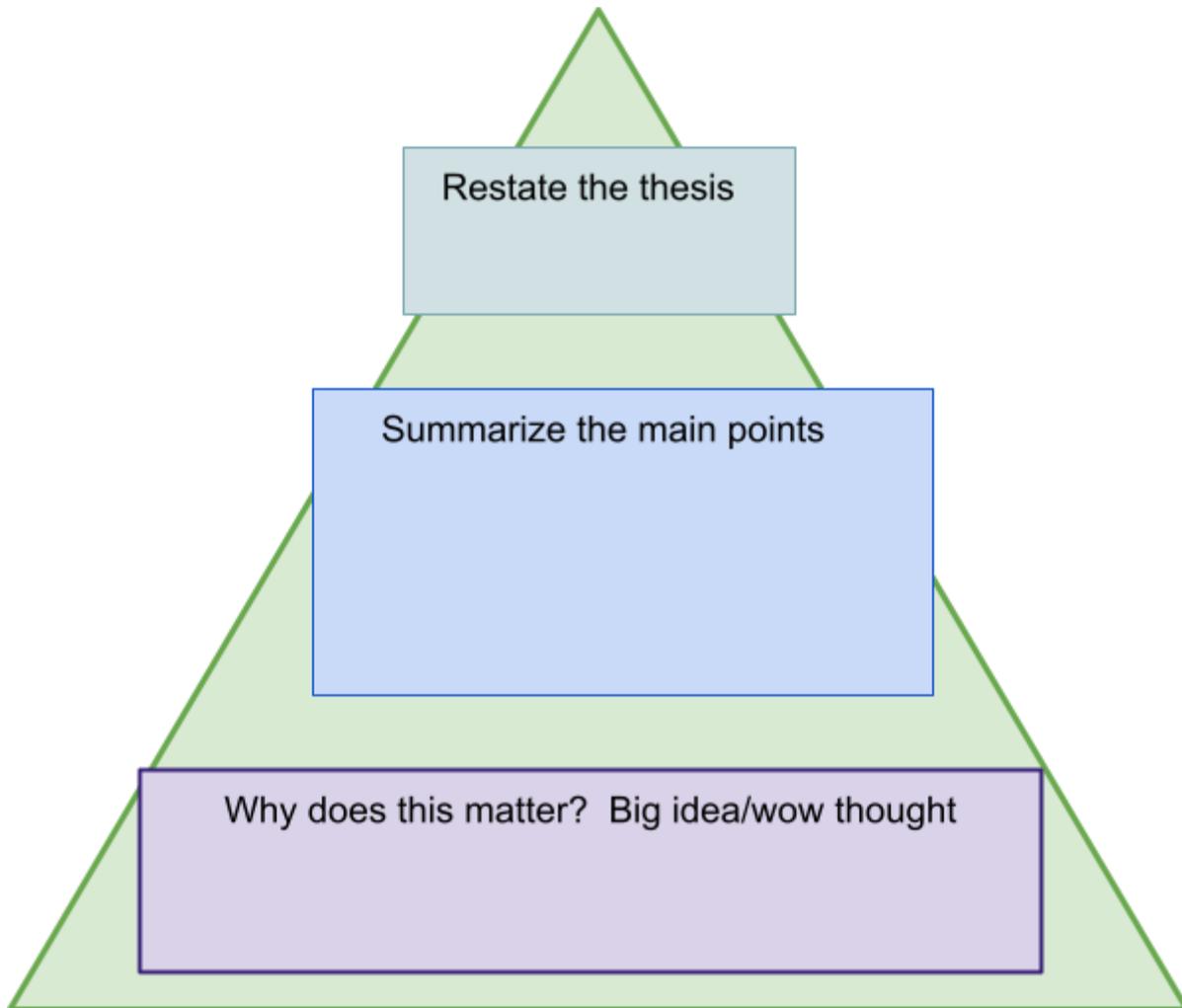
Analysis:

Evidence:

Analysis:

Transition Sentence:

Conclusion:



R

Revision Checklist

- Do all of your subclaims agree?
- Did you answer the prompt?
- How do ideas flow?

E

Expand

Quotes from a primary source:

Source:

Page:

Quote/paraphrase:

Source:

Page:

Quote/paraphrase:

Outside sources:

Source (Author, title, link):

Page:

Quote/paraphrase:

Source (Author, title, link):

Page:

Quote/paraphrase:

E

Expanding Tools

Source Tracker

Source 1:

URL (if applies):

Author:

Title:

Location:

Specific Quote

Page number _____

Source 2:

URL (if applies):

Author:

Title:

Location:

Specific Quote

Page number _____

Source 3:

URL (if applies):

Author:

Title:

Location:

Specific Quote

Page number _____

Parts of an Essay

➤ Introduction

- Hook
- Background
- Thesis

➤ Body

- Topic Sentence
- Evidence
- Analysis
- Transition Sentence

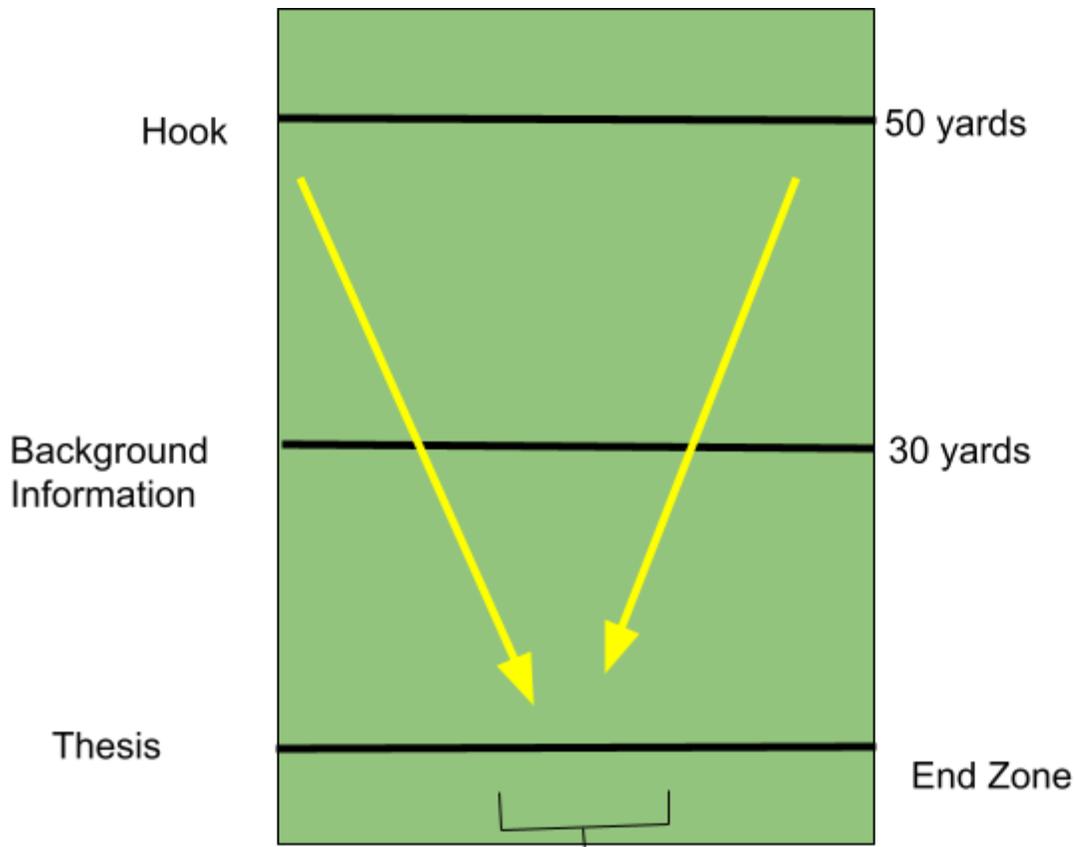
➤ Conclusion

- Restate the thesis
- Main points
- Why it matters

Introduction

- Hook
- Background
- Thesis

Introduction:



An introduction moves from broad to specific. The hook, the starting point of an essay, is the broadest part of your essay and is used to grab the reader's attention. Then, an essay starts to get more specific as it includes the essential background information needed to understand what the paper is about. Lastly, the most specific portion of an introduction is the thesis. The thesis is an answer to the prompt and the basis of the entire paper.

Hook

In an introductory paragraph, a hook is used to grab the reader's attention and to engage them.

Think of a hook as a Super Bowl commercial. All commercials are competing for the viewer to remember their commercial the best and to make a lasting impression. When writing, it is important for the reader to want to read your paper starting with the first sentence.

There are four common ways to grab a reader's attention

- Tell a short story or anecdote
- Use a fact
- Use a quote
- Ask a question

Super bowl commercials use these methods frequently.

→ For instance, Budweiser commercials often **use a story** relating to the Budweiser Clydesdales to engage the viewer.



→ Anti-smoking commercials tend to **use facts** about smoking to deter a viewer.



This commercial says that "children whose parents or siblings smoke are three times more likely to smoke than children living in non-smoking households."

→ Some commercials **quote** a memorable tag-line or famous individual.



Like when Ram trucks used Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech in their commercial.

→ Others, like Allstate, ask a question to engage the audience.



When writing a hook, think of how you could grab the viewer's (reader's) attention in order to make them want to read your paper. A hook does not have to use one of these four strategies, but make sure that you engage the reader and start off strong.

Essential Background Information

Before a game even starts, the commentators start talking about the game and introduce what teams are playing, what things to look for from each team, and anything essential regarding the venue, teams, or game.

For example, for the 2019 Women's World Cup Final, a commentator would likely start with...

The 2019 Women's World Cup final is taking place in Lyon, France and will be between the United States and the Netherlands. The USA, coached by Jill Ellis, is favored to beat the Netherlands, coached by Sarina Weigman. In order for the Netherlands to be victorious, they will need to break apart the USA's backline and challenge the inexperienced goalie. For the United States, it is best if they are mindful of counter-attacks and keep in a 2-4-4 formation...

Let's break this up:

The 2019 Women's World Cup final is taking place in Lyon, France and will be between the United States and the Netherlands.

Time frame, location, and teams

The USA, coached by Jill Ellis, is favored to beat the Netherlands, coached by Sarina Weigman.

Coaches and expectations

In order for the Netherlands to be victorious, they will need to break apart the USA's backline and challenge the inexperienced goalie. For the United States, it is best if they are mindful of counter-attacks and keep in a 2-4-4 formation...

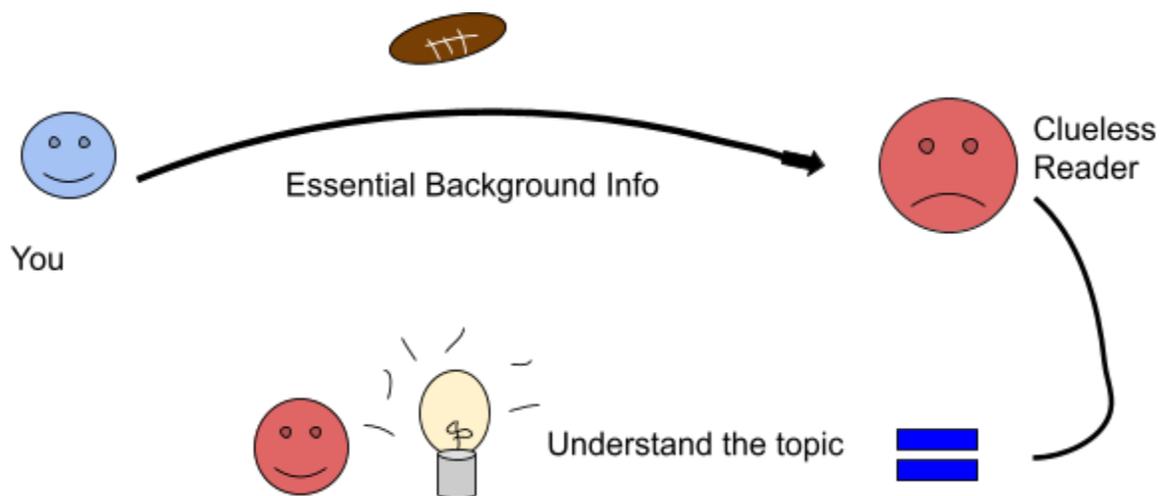
What will be evaluated in the game



Who? What? Where? When? How?

Just as a commentator would give essential background information before a game starts, an introduction in an essay must give needed details for the reader to understand what the essay will be on.

Background information is a pass from you, the writer, to the reader so that they understand the topic of the essay.



These are some things to consider including in your introduction when writing an essay:

- ❑ Are there any unique or specific terms that need to be defined?
- ❑ Is there a historical element or time frame that needs to be considered?
- ❑ What things should the reader know about the main topic?
- ❑ Is the essay on a book, play, movie, article, ect.? If so, include the author (director/producer), title, and brief summary or main idea that coincides with your essay.

- ❑ If applies:
 - ❑ Who is this about?
 - ❑ Where did it take place?
 - ❑ Why is it relevant?
 - ❑ What is it?
 - ❑ When did it happen?
 - ❑ How is it going to be looked at?

The goal of background information is to provide "need to know," necessary information. Do not over summarize or go off-topic!

Thesis Statement

What is a thesis statement?

- A thesis statement is an answer to a question or prompt.
- It is the main idea for your entire paper.
- It is the defense of your paper. Defense wins games and a good thesis sets up your entire paper.

There are two common thesis formats.

- Trident
- Umbrella

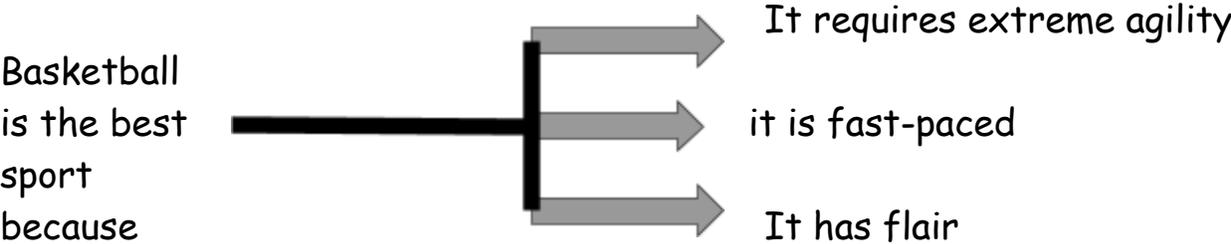
Let's explore these formats with an example.

You are given the following prompt and asked to write an essay:

What is the best sport and why?

Trident Thesis:

Each main point you are going to talk about is covered in your thesis.



Basketball is the best sport because it requires extreme agility, it is fast-paced, and it has flair.

=

This type of thesis is like man-to-man defense because each main point is covered just like each player is covered in man-to-man defense.

Man-to-man defense:

X -- O O --- X

X-O O--X

O

X

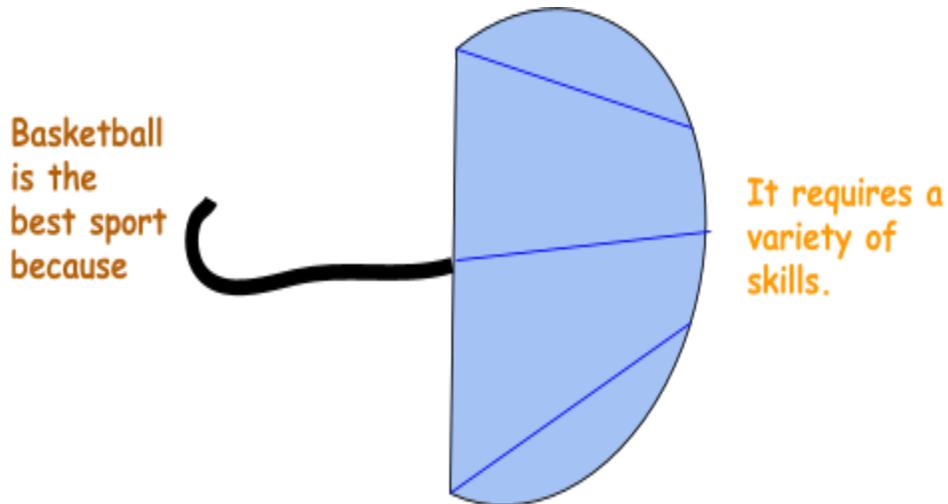
X--O It requires extreme agility

X---O It is fast-paced

X---O It has flair

Umbrella thesis statement:

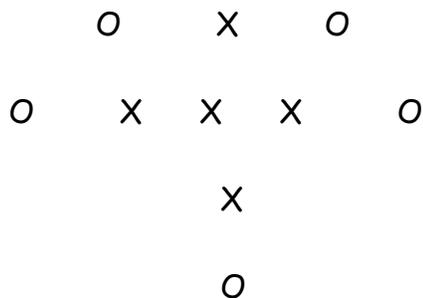
An umbrella thesis covers the main idea of your paper. It is still an arguable answer to a question, but it does not specifically cover each point.



Basketball is the best sport because it requires a variety of unique skills.

This is like a zone defense.

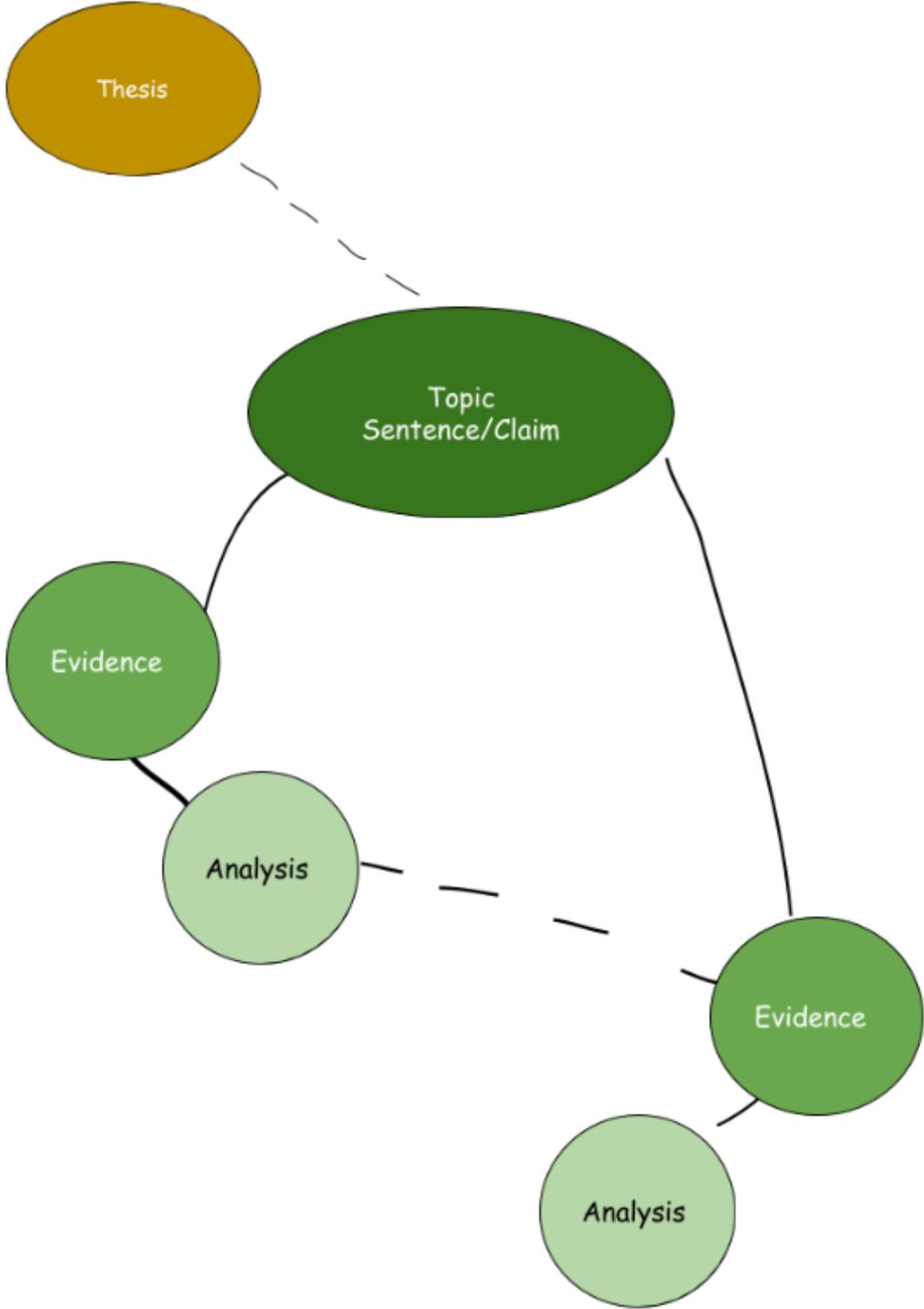
In a zone defense, you cover an area, not one specific person.



Body

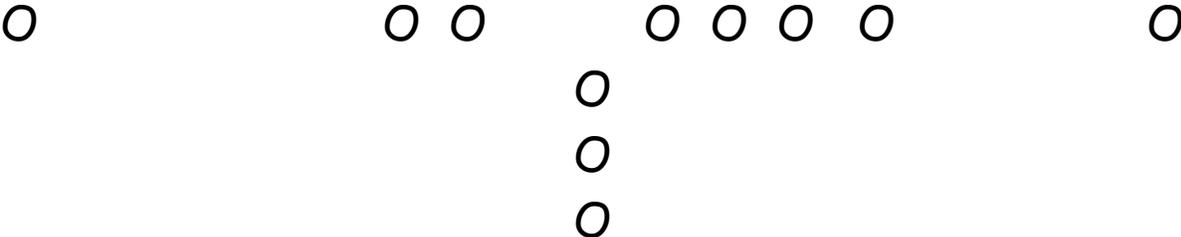
- Topic Sentence
- Evidence
- Analysis
- Transition Sentence

Body Paragraph



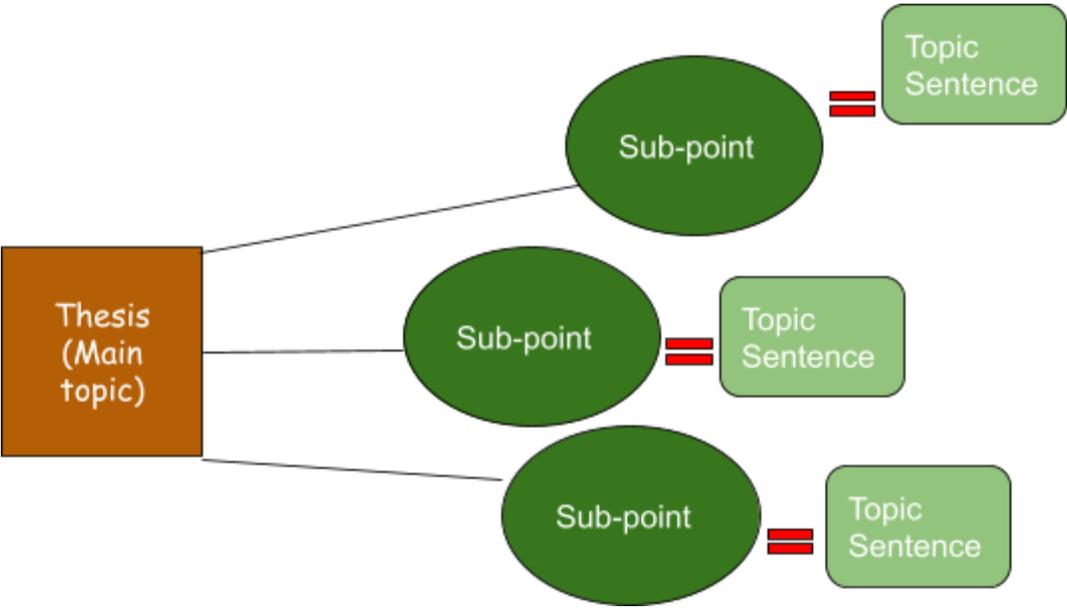
Topic Sentence

Before the QB can even throw the ball in football, the players have to establish a position.



For each body paragraph, you have to establish a position too.

This is your topic sentence. It is the main claim or idea for that paragraph. This main idea is often referred to as a subclaim because it is a sub-point to the thesis.



In football, the starting position of the offense determines what the play options will be. Offensive positioning sets the tone for that play, just like your topic sentence sets the tone for your paragraph.

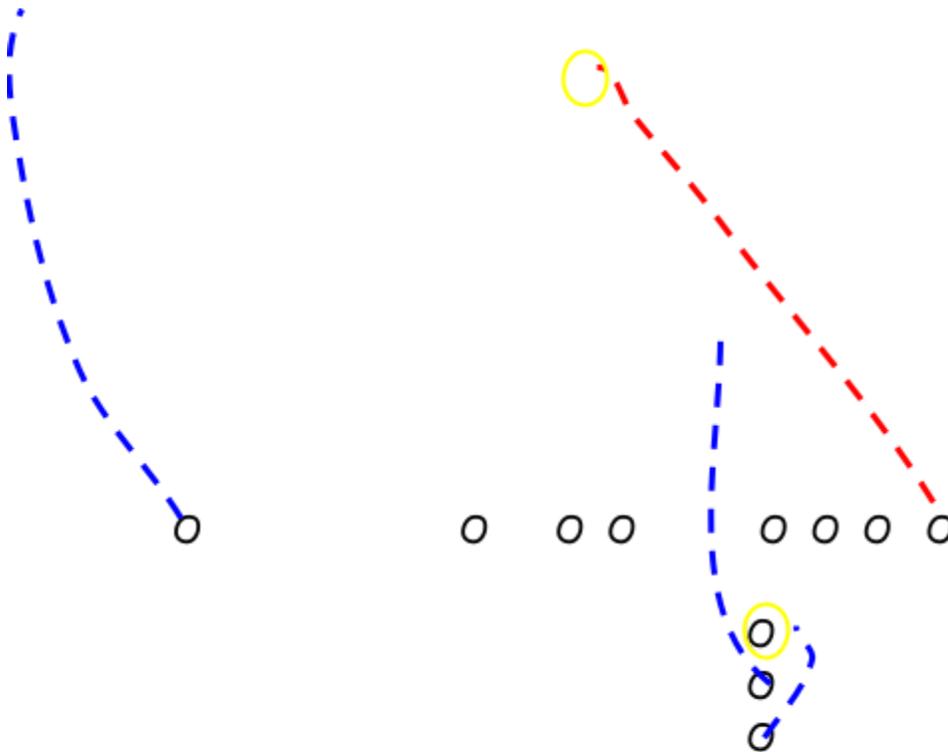
Just as the player positioning determines what possible plays could be run, the topic sentence determines what the paragraph will cover. By sticking to one main idea per paragraph, it keeps the essay organized.

When you are done writing each paragraph, you can check that your topic sentence:

- Relates to your thesis
- Relates to the main idea of the paragraph
- Connects well with the transition sentence

Evidence

When an offensive play is called, there are specific, planned movements that the offense makes.



In an essay, in order to support subclaims, specific material must be used to support your claim. This is your evidence.

Evidence supports your topic sentence and provides support for your thesis.

Some types of evidence include:

- Quotations
- Paraphrasing
- Facts
- Examples

Different types of essays will require different types of evidence. Here are some examples of the different types of evidence you may need depending on the type of essay you are writing.

- **Narrative Essay**-Telling a story
 - Quotes from a person
 - Short anecdotes (stories)
- **Persuasive Essay**-Convince the audience (reader) of something
 - Facts from a database (requires a citation)
 - Quotes
 - Paraphrasing
 - Examples
 - Situational examples
 - Potential possibilities
- **Research Essay**-Present a wide variety of information on a topic
 - Database (requires a citation)
 - Quotes

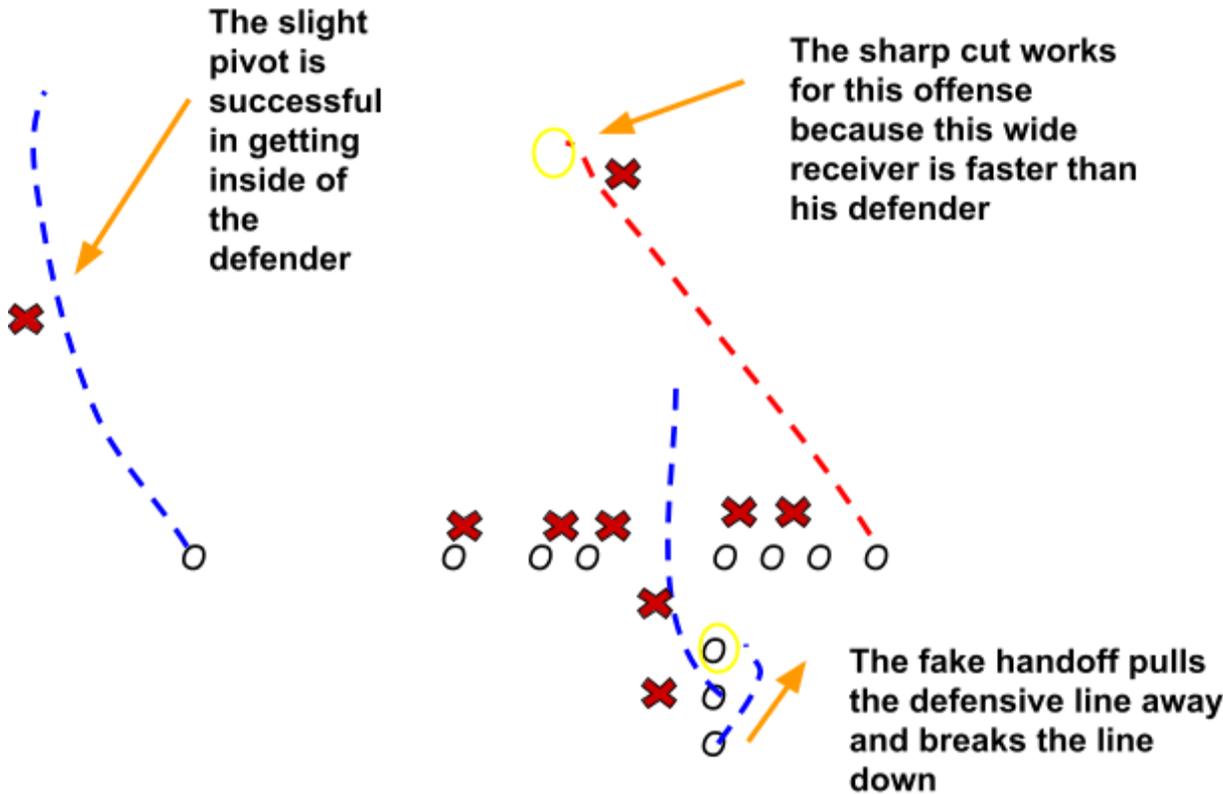
- Paraphrasing
- Books (requires a citation)
 - Quotes
 - Paraphrasing
- Interviews (requires a citation)
 - Quotes
 - Paraphrasing
- Podcasts/Movies (requires a citation)
 - Quotes
 - Paraphrasing
- **Response to Literature Essay**-Respond to something that you read
 - Book (requires a citation)
 - Quotes
 - Paraphrasing
 - Secondary sources (articles on that book); (requires a citation)
 - Quotes
 - Paraphrasing
- **Critical Essay**-Analysing if something was done well or not done well
 - Primary Source (The original book, movie, ect.)
 - Quotes
 - Paraphrasing
 - Secondary Source (Articles, ect. written about the original)

- Quotes
- Paraphrasing
- **Expository Essay**-Present the facts without emotion or bias
 - Book
 - Database
 - Articles

Just as player positioning is essential in play development, evidence is essential in essay development.

Analysis

If running a play is evidence, why a play did or did not work would be the analysis. After a play is run, commentators discuss why the play was successful or not. In an essay, it is important to interpret what the evidence means, just like a commentator interprets plays.



Each player has a specific run pattern or movement for a play. But why a play does or does not work is not as clear. A viewer must ask why questions like why was the defender beat? Why did the quarterback not have enough time to throw? Why did the pivot not work? Why did the quarterback not see an open player? Why did the coach do a running play on a fourth down? This is analysis!

Stuck on analysis?

Ask yourself these questions.

- Why am I including this evidence?
- What does it mean?
- How is it proving my point?
- What do I want the reader to understand about this evidence?
- Does it have a deeper meaning?
- Why is this a good example for my point?
- How does it relate to the prompt?

When writing, one should not assume the reader understands what is being said. Tell the reader what to think. Explore why the evidence fits in your essay and what it is really saying.

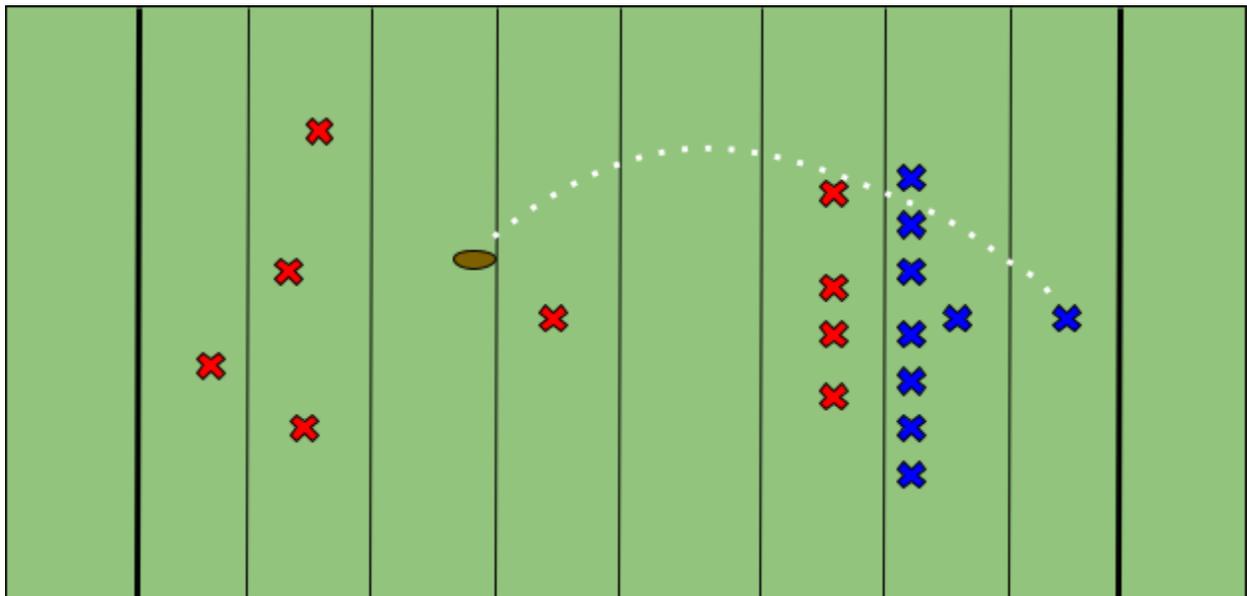
Remember, evidence is the factual information and analysis is the insight into that information.

Transition Sentence

A transition sentence takes the reader from one idea to the next.

In football, if you are on offense and it is the fourth down, nine yards to go, in your half of the field, it is popular to punt the ball to the other team.

A transition sentence is a punt to the other team. It is the transition from one idea (team) to the next idea (team).



Examples:

- Example for a compare and contrast essay of football versus rugby:

- ★ Paragraph 1 is about the similarities of football and rugby.

- ★ Paragraph 2 is about the differences in how the ball moves in football and rugby.

The last sentence of paragraph 1 could read something like:

Although football and rugby have many similarities, there are numerous differences regarding how the ball is played.

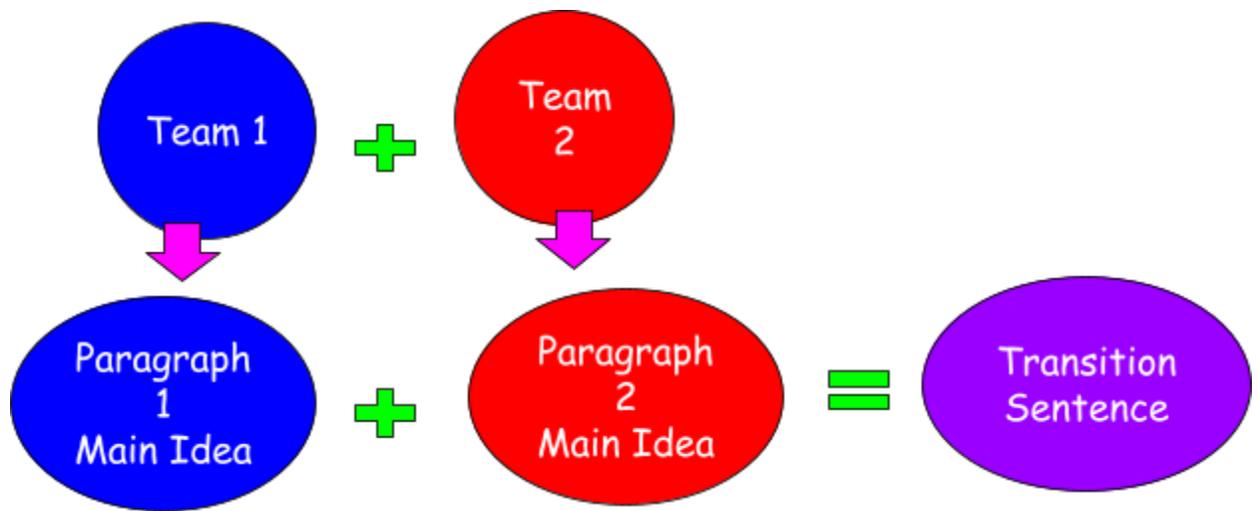
- Example of an argument that football fans are the most dedicated fans.

- ★ Paragraph 1: Football fans follow their favorite teams even when geographic locations changes.

- ★ Paragraph 2: Football fans are willing to tailgate for hours to show team spirit.

The last sentence of paragraph 1 could read something like:

Not only are football fans dedicated enough to love their favorite team no matter the team's geographical location, but they are also willing to give up time before and after a game to show team spirit.



Let's look at a topic sentence, evidence, analysis, and transition sentence in an entire paragraph.

Prompt: What is the best sport and why?

Thesis: Soccer is the best sport because it requires extreme endurance, independent thought, and technical skills.

Sub-claim 1 (1 paragraph): Endurance

Sub-claim 2 (1 paragraph): Independent thought

Sub-claim 3 (1 paragraph): Technical skill

1st paragraph:

In comparison to other sports, soccer is the most physically demanding and requires extreme endurance. (TOPIC SENTENCE).

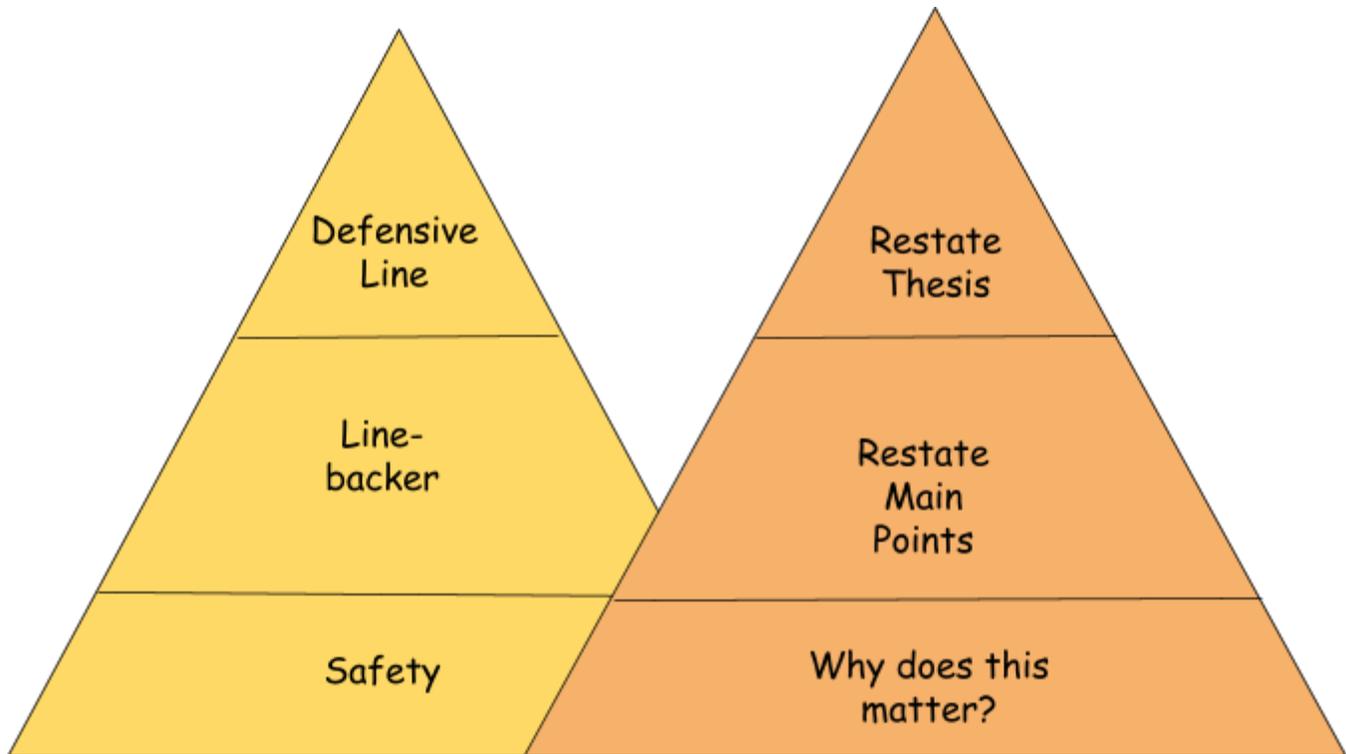
Although football is known for being physically demanding, according to Tracy Miller's article, "Which Sports Run the Most," in The Daily News, **football players only run 1.5 miles per game. In contrast, soccer players run an average of seven to ten miles a game (Miller). (EVIDENCE).** This indicates that although both games have a long play time, soccer players are continually running throughout the game and in turn must be in tremendous shape. **Given that soccer players are running over a mile every ten minutes, it is evident that soccer is one of the best sports because of its physical demand. (ANALYSIS).** Furthermore, unlike other sports, soccer has minimal substitutions allowed.

With only three substitutes per game permitted, coaches and players must strategically play through injuries, fatigue, and other strenuous conditions. (EVIDENCE). Given the limited opportunities for rest, many soccer players must display extreme endurance for over ninety minutes thus further proving the physical rigor and supreme athletic ability required to play soccer. (ANALYSIS). Not only does soccer require peak physical ability, but players must frequently act independently of coaches. (TRANSITION SENTENCE)

Conclusion

- Restate the thesis
- Main points
- Why it matters

The conclusion can be equated to how a defense sets up in football.



Restating the thesis:

The defensive line tends to be big, strong players. They go after the ball carrier and bust down the offensive line.

Just like the **defensive line goes first**, your big, main idea (thesis) comes at the **start of your conclusion**.

Restating the main points:

Supporting the defensive line are the linebackers. Linebackers support the defensive line, communicate to the rest of the defense, go after the run, and tend to make most of the tackles.

Just as the **linebackers support much of the defense**, a paper's **main subclaims support the thesis** and develop the paper. Restating the **main points follows restating the thesis** in a conclusion just as linebackers set up behind the defensive line.

Why it matters:

The safety tends to be farthest from the line of scrimmage and is responsible for pass coverage. They tend to be the last line of defense.

Just as the **safety** is farthest from the line of scrimmage and the **last line of defense**, the **concluding sentence** is the most distant from your thesis and the **last chance to impact the reader**. A great tackle downfield leaves the viewer intrigued. Leave off with a why it matters/impactful thought as your last sentence to leave the reader intrigued.

Defensive

Line

Restate the thesis in new words

Linebacker

Linebacker

Linebacker

Restate the main points

Safety

Safety

Why does this matter/why is it important/grand idea

Citations

Citations are like commentators.

After a player scores or makes a great play, the commentator notes who made the play and where it was on the field.

★ **For example:**

"At the 17th minute, Ram's running back Gurley just ran from the 55-yard line down to the 20th-yard line"

Now, if Gurley made a great run and got no credit, he may be a little upset.

In writing, it is the same. We have to give credit to information that did not come from our brains or is not common knowledge.

This is where citations come in!

Citing Sources

There are numerous citation styles but the three most common are:

❖ **MLA**

- Most commonly used:
 - English
 - Cultural Studies
 - Humanities

❖ **APA**

- Most commonly used:
 - Psychology
 - Science
 - Education

❖ **Chicago**

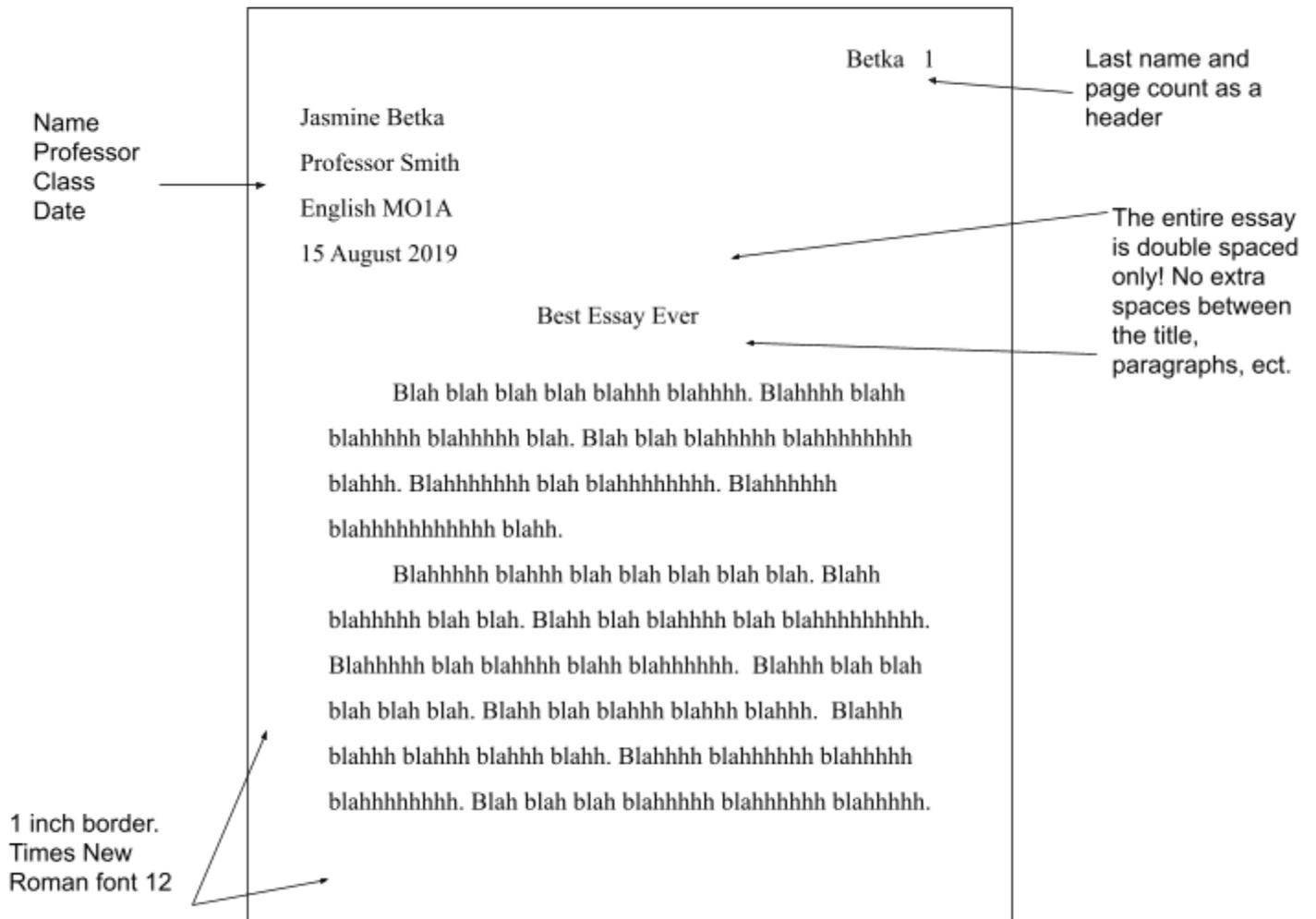
- Most commonly used
 - History
 - Business
 - Fine Arts

We will focus on three main parts of *MLA*:

- Formatting
- In-text citations
- Works Cited Page

Formatting

The basics of formatting in MLA include double-spacing the entire paper, using Times New Roman font size 12 throughout the paper, and having one-inch margins. In addition, a running head should go on the top, right side of each page with your last name and the page number.



In-text Citation

Just like commentators announce the who and where of a play, an essay must say who and where information came from.

For in-text citations find the **Author** and **page number**

If there is no author, follow the chart shown later on in this section. Most commonly, the title will be used in place of the author.

→ The first time you cite a source, introduce the source in words:

In **Smith's** novel, "The Best of Football," Smith discusses how football changes lives.

After that, you can mix and match how you cite:

→ Option 1:

Football deters seven thousand teenagers from joining a gang each year (**Smith 7**).

→ Option 2:

Smith notes that football prevents seven thousand teenagers from joining a gang each year (**7**).

For quotations:

→ Option 1:

Smith discusses how "equipment, time, and resources are the biggest hurdles to teens playing football" (7).

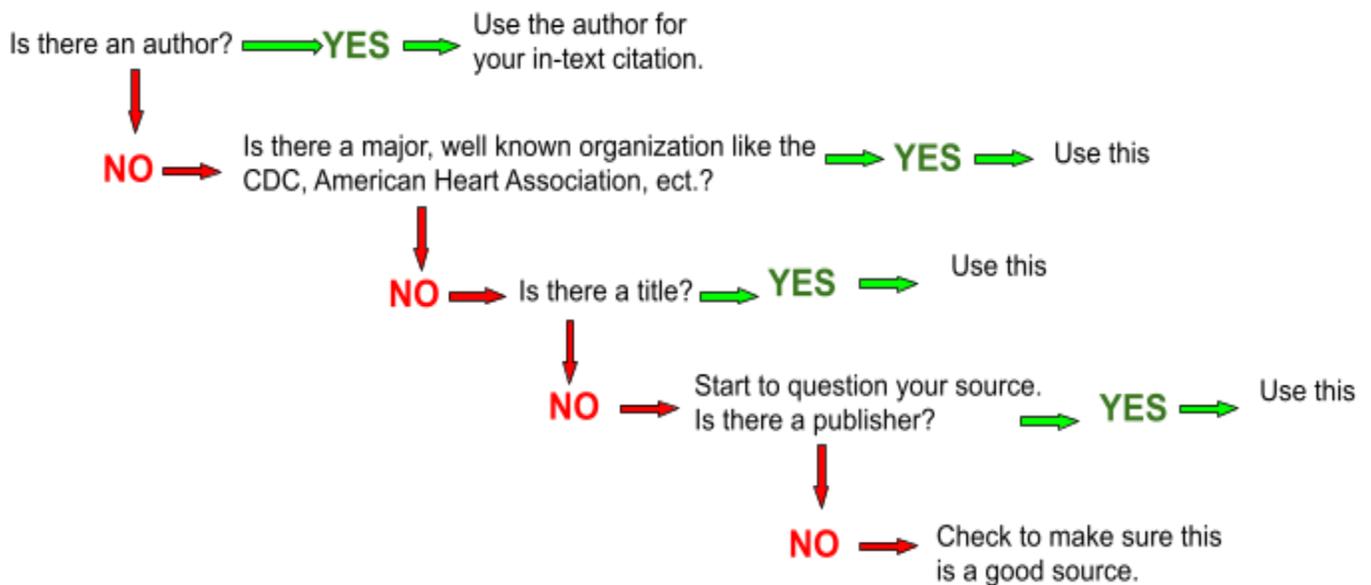
→ Option 2:

Although sports provide opportunities, "equipment, time, and resources are the biggest hurdles to teens playing football" (Smith 7).

There are two major components to include in an in-text citation, the author and the page number. However, it does not always work out perfect. Use the chart below to help determine what to include in your in-text citation.

Part 1:

S
T
A
R
T



Part 2:

For books and sources with page numbers, use the page number in the in-text citation. Short, online articles will often not have a page number to include.

Revision Process Using the SPORT Method

S Style

P Proofread

O Organization

R Read it all of the way through

T Technical

STYLE

- Did you use academic language?
 - Point of view
 - Tense
 - Numbers
 - Contractions
 - Gender consideration
 - Definitive claims
 - Rhetorical questions
- Do you have any cliches?
 - Avoiding cliches
 - Common language
- How is your word choice?
 - Picking words that mean the most

PROOFREAD

- Spelling
 - Did you autocorrect any words wrong?
 - Check the typical trouble words
- Grammar
 - Subject-verb agreement
 - Clear modifiers
 - Which she?
 - Comma use
 - Run-on
 - Comma-splice
- Sentence Structure
 - Wordy?
 - Short and choppy?

ORGANIZATION

- Does the order of your paragraphs make sense?
- Do you have any really long paragraphs or really short paragraphs?

READ IT

- Make sure you read it all of the way through

TECHNICAL

- Did you meet the course length requirement?
- Did you answer the prompt entirely?
- Does your thesis still match all of your paragraphs?
- Do you have the required amount of sources?

S

STYLE

- Did you use academic language?
 - Point of view
 - Tense
 - Numbers
 - Contractions
 - Gender consideration
 - Definitive claims
 - Rhetorical questions
- Do you have any cliches?
 - Avoiding cliches
 - Common language
- Word Choice
 - Picking words that mean the most
 - Wordiness

Academic Language

In formal writing, it is important to use academic language. Academic language is formal, proper writing that avoids common, every day language. Some common things to keep in mind are what tense you are using when you write, the point of view, and what words you use to convey a message.

Point of view:

Academic writing uses third-person point of view. Let's review what the points of view are.

First-person point of view:

I/We

Second-person point of view:

You

Third-person point of view:

He/She

They

It

One

Tense:

Tense refers to verb usage throughout an essay. In academic writing, it is important to stay in the same tense throughout the entire paper. Below are examples of the three most common tenses used in academic writing. When in doubt, the majority of academic writing takes place in the present simple tense. Although tense sounds complicated, and the types of tenses sound fancy, focus on whether or not you are talking about something like it already happened, is happening, or will happen.

→ Present Simple Tense:

Present Simple Tense is good for discussing known facts that apply to the past and future. Below are some examples.

- Many athletes share a common practice of...
- Football players run an average of...
- Head trauma is connected to...

→ Past Simple Tense

Past Simple Tense generally is used for discussing past events. Below are some examples of this verb tense.

- In the 70s, USC coaches documented...

- In the past, thin helmets **were used**....
- Many football players **had** to...

→ Present Perfect Tense:

Present Perfect Tense is most useful when talking about past research that applies today. Here are some examples.

- Brain injury research **has been** seen in...
- Many sports analysts **have discovered**...
- Researchers **have** noted...

Numbers:

For MLA, spell out all numbers that can be written in one or two words

For example:

Seven, sixteen, seventy-two, two thousand, eleven billion

You can use numerals for other numbers

5 $\frac{3}{4}$, 2,004, 32,000,000

Contractions:

Contractions are considered to be informal. Because of this, it is best practice to write out all contractions.

Example:

Don't ----> Do not

Aren't ----> Are not

Gender Specific Language

It is important to not assume a gender to certain behavior while writing. By only using "he" or "she," it can stereotype genders and disclude individuals.

→ Example:

Within the next five years, men will be able to watch football on three-dimensional televisions.

Fix:

Within the next five years, individuals will be able to watch football on three-dimensional televisions.

→ Example:

If you know a good doctor, please give me his number.

Fix:

If you know a good doctor, please give me his or her number.

Definitive Claims

In academic writing, it is important to avoid all-inclusive, definitive claims

For example, avoid including words like always, everyone and all.

Example:

People always want what is not good for them.

Everyone hates tests.

All women are naturally caring.

Potential fixes:

People tend to gravitate toward things that are not good for them.

The majority of people do not enjoy taking tests.

Some believe that women tend to be caring.

Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions are meant to make a point instead of answer a question.

→ For example:

Who knew?

Can't the quarterback do anything right?

So why is this still a thing?

Instead of asking a question, try to make a statement expressing the emotion you are trying to get from you reader.

→ Potential Fixes:

A rare known fact...

During this game, many fans were disappointed with the quarterback's performance because it seemed as if he could not complete a pass.

Sadly, no solution has been found to an issue that has existed for sixty years.

Cliches

A cliché is a common, overused phrase.

Examples:

Time heals all wounds

Love is blind

Brave as a lion

On the other hand

And so on

It is best practice to avoid using clichés when writing formally. Instead of using a common phrase, explain what the meaning is in your own words.

Common Language

When writing academically, it is important to use the formal version of a word and to avoid language that may be commonly used with friends.

Examples:

→ Cop

Fix: The police officer or sheriff's deputy

→ TV

Fix: Television

→ It was totally crazy how he went off on him.

Fix: The way that the coach yelled at the player was irrational and infuriating.

Word Choice

Word choice refers to making sure that your paper is the clearest, most concise version it could be. When revising, consider simplifying phrases and picking the most specific word. Be direct!

Being Specific:

Simplifying wordiness.

A common area for wordiness is in introductory phrases.

→ Example:

It is important to note

Fix:

Importantly,

→ Example:

The fact that...

Fix:

Since...

Other times, wordiness can come from trying to fit too many ideas into one sentence.

Example:

Because the Rams are new to Los Angeles, and also because their coach is new, they were not expected to go to the super bowl and because of this, a lot of people were surprised that they made it last year and also hope that they win it this year.

Ask yourself what you really want to say and what your main points are.

Main points:

New coach, new team

Made it to the Super Bowl, hope to win this year.

Potential fix:

Although the Rams are new to Los Angeles and have a new coach, to many people's surprise they made it to the Super Bowl. Hopefully they can make it again and win.

Other times, wordiness can come from using a passive voice instead of an active voice. Passive voice is when the subject is receiving the verb. In an active voice, the subject is doing the verb.

Example of passive voice:

The ball was caught.

Active voice:

He caught the ball.

When proofreading, make sure that you simplify ideas and make your sentences as clear and concise as possible!

P

PROOFREAD

- ❑ **Spelling**
 - ❑ Did you autocorrect any words wrong?
 - ❑ Check the typical trouble words
- ❑ **Grammar**
 - ❑ Subject-verb agreement
 - ❑ Clear modifiers
 - ❑ Which she?
 - ❑ Comma use
 - ❑ Run-on
 - ❑ Comma-splice
- ❑ **Sentence Structure**
 - ❑ Wordy?
 - ❑ Short and choppy?

Spelling

Although autocorrect and spell check are some of the greatest inventions, it is important to double-check words that are changed!

Autocorrect

The internet is full of mistakes people have made with autocorrect...don't be that person; check words that are changed!

For instance, there is a big difference between: Comma usage and Coma usage.

Trouble Words

Make sure to check for words that have multiple spellings or are often misused. Here are some examples.

Accept vs. Except

Accept is a verb meaning to receive something willingly or hold something as true

Except is a preposition, conjunction and a verb and means...

Affect vs. Effect

Affect is a verb that means "to influence"

Effect is a noun and indicates "the result of"

Example: Many people were greatly **affected** by the fires and the damage has had lasting **effects**.

Fewer vs. Less

Fewer refers to countable quantities

Less is used for quantities you cannot count (you may be able to measure it, like liquid, but not count it).

Subject-Verb Agreement

As you write, it is important to make sure that your subject and your verb agree. These are some common rules to follow to get you started.

Rules and Examples:

- ★ *Two or more nouns/pronouns connected by **and** ---> plural verb (PV)*

He and his friends **are** playing football.

S P PV

- ★ *Two or more singular nouns/pronouns connected by **or** ---> use a singular verb*

The **bat** or the **helmet** **is** in the bag.

S S SV

- ★ *If you have a *singular and a plural noun/pronoun* connected by **or**, the verb should **agree** with the part of the **subject that is closest to the verb***

The **coaches** or the **team** **runs** every day.

P S SV

The **team** or the **coaches** **run** every day.

S P PV

- ★ Also, make sure to only use they when referring to multiple people. It is common to accidentally use they as a singular pronoun.

Incorrect:

We do not know who the new coach will be, but they must be able to hold practice at three each day.

Correct:

We do not know who the new coach will be, but he or she must be able to hold practice at three each day.

Clear Modifiers

When talking about multiple people, characters, or events, it is important to make sure that in each sentence, it is obvious who you are talking about.

Let's look at an example:

Example:

Alex Morgan and Meagan Rapinoe were two of the leading scorers in the World Cup. She has also been in the news for other reasons as well.

Who is "she" referring to? Morgan or Rapinoe?

Fix:

Alex Morgan and Meagan Rapinoe were two of the leading scorers in the World Cup. Rapinoe has also been in the news for other reasons as well.

Commas

Because comma usage is closely related to dependent and independent clauses, it is important to understand what an independent and dependent clause is.

Independent Clause (IC)

An independent clause is a sentence that can stand on its own. It must contain a subject and a verb, and **express a complete thought**.

Dependent Clause (DC)

A dependent clause cannot stand on its own as a sentence. Although dependent clauses contain a subject and a verb, they do not express a complete thought. In other words, if you saw a dependent clause on its own, it would not sound like a complete sentence.

Sometimes, a simple word can turn an independent clause into a dependent clause.

For example:

IC: I do not go to practice unless my homework is done.

DC: **Since** I do not go to practice unless my homework is done...

Just by adding a word to the beginning of this sentence, it no longer expresses a complete thought. More context would be needed to make it a sentence.

IC: Since I do not go to practice unless my homework is done, I cannot go to practice today.

Here are some common comma usage rules:

Listing Items

When listing a series of items, use commas to separate each item.

Example: It is important to wear a helmet, mouthguard, pads, and cleats.

Before a coordinating conjunction that is used to link two independent clauses

Often, short sentences or sentences with a related idea can be combined using a comma and a coordinating conjunction (if, or, but, and.).

Example: I used to play soccer, **but** now I play football.

Technically you could write: I used to play soccer. Now I play football. However, since these two ideas are related, you can use a comma and a coordinating conjunction to combine them.

When a dependent clause starts a sentence

In writing, dependent clauses can be beneficial in starting a sentence. In these cases, when a dependent clause is at the start of a sentence before an independent clause, use a comma to separate the two.

Example: When I play football, my legs get sore.
DC IC

No comma if you said: My legs get sore when I play football.

For additive/explanatory phrases

An additive/explanatory phrase is beneficial for clarification or adding non-essential details to a sentence.

Example: My favorite football team, since last year, is playing on Sunday.

“Since last year” is non-essential information. It adds to the sentence, but the sentence would still make sense without it: My favorite football team is playing on Sunday. Therefore, it goes in commas.

Example: As a linebacker, a defensive position, I must be prepared to tackle.

Similarly to the above example, “a defensive position” is a clarifying phrase but not needed to complete the sentence. If you cross it out, the sentence will still make sense: As a linebacker, I must be prepared to tackle.

Introductory adverbs

When starting a sentence with a stand-alone adverb, follow the adverb with a comma.

Example: Suddenly, I felt my knee buckle.

Example: Shockingly, The Rams lost.

In quotations that include who said the quote

When quoting someone, use a comma after the person if you say who first, or after the quote if you say who following the quotation.

Example: The coach said, "run faster."

Example: "Run faster," said the coach.

Dates and numbers

For dates, follow: weekday, month and day, year.

Example: The Super Bowl is Sunday, February 9, 2019.

Yes/no/freestanding words

Use a comma after a freestanding words like yes or no.

Example: Yes, I will be at practice tomorrow.

Example: No, I cannot make it to the game.

Between adjectives modifying the same object

When using multiple adjectives to describe the same object, use commas in between each adjective.

Example: During the game, the **dirty, aggressive** defender hurt our quarterback's knee.

Adj. adj. object

Run-ons

A run-on sentence occurs when two independent clauses run into each other without proper punctuation.

For example: Football is good for people's health it makes them run more.

Football is good for people's health. (IC-complete thought)

It makes them run more (IC-complete thought)

To fix a run-on, either:

- Use a **period** between the two independent clauses
- Use a **semicolon** between the two independent clauses
- Use a **comma with a coordinating conjunction** between the two independent clauses
- Make one of the independent clauses a **dependent clause**

Possible fixes:

- Football is good for people's health. It makes them run more.
- Football is good for people's health; it makes them run more.
- Football is good for people's health, and it makes them to run more.
- Because football makes people run more, it is good for their health.

Comma Splice

A comma splice occurs when a comma is used to separate two independent clauses.

For example: Football is good for people's health, it makes them run more.

Football is good for people's health. (IC-complete thought)

It makes them run more (IC-complete thought)

Since these are two independent clauses, they cannot be separated by a comma. The fix for a comma splice is the same as a run-on. Simply, fix the punctuation between the two clauses.

Sentence Structure

Wordiness vs. Short and Choppy

Long is not always better! As you proofread, check to make sure that there are not too many ideas in one sentence. Sometimes, it is better to break a sentence up so that it is clear and easy to understand.

Example: Although I like to play soccer and it provides physical activity, even though I am in school and I work so I have limited time, I play soccer because I enjoy it and get to meet new people.

Fix: What are your main points you are trying to make?

I like to play soccer even though I have limited time because I am in school and I work. It provides physical activity and I get to meet new people.

In contrast, if your entire paper is filled with short, choppy sentences, it may be best to challenge yourself to combine similar ideas into one sentence.

Example: I like to play soccer. It provides physical activity. I have limited time to play because I work and I am in school. I enjoy soccer and get to meet new people.

Fix: I like to play soccer even though I have limited time because I am in school and I work. It provides physical activity and I get to meet new people.



Organization

- ❑ Does the order of your paragraphs make sense?
- ❑ Do you have any really long paragraphs or really short paragraphs?

Order

Once you are done crafting your supporting ideas into paragraphs, it is important to look back to check if the order makes sense. Sometimes, there is a more natural flow that could be established by simply moving paragraphs around.

For example, if you are writing an essay on football and you discuss the following main ideas:

- Financial Resources
- Opportunities
- Access

It may make more sense to talk about your ideas in the following order:

- Financial Resources
- Access
- Opportunities

By doing so, you could discuss how financial resources lead into accessibility of the sport and then end on the opportunities football provides. This may be less choppy than switching from financial resources to opportunities and then back to accessibility.

Warning! If you change the order of your paragraphs you may need to go back and change the transition sentences!

Length of Paragraphs

Sometimes, it is easy to get carried away with a topic or feel like you don't have enough information on another. This leads to some paragraphs being really long and others really short. It is best to go back and make sure that all of your paragraphs have enough support and to also check if some paragraphs should be split up. Many individuals were taught that essays should only be five paragraphs. Unless your professor specifically asks for a five paragraph essay, it is okay to have more than three body paragraphs! Let's look at an example of when it may be best to split ideas.

Topic: Informative essay on football

Body Paragraph 1: Resources and access to playing (2 pages long)

Body Paragraph 2: Opportunities from football ($\frac{3}{4}$ page)

Body Paragraph 3: Health benefits of playing ($\frac{3}{4}$ page)

In this case, it may be beneficial to split up paragraph 1. Instead of talking about resources and access in one paragraph, resources could be one paragraph and access could be a second paragraph.

Body Paragraph 1: Resources (1 page)

Body Paragraph 2: Access to playing (1 page)

Body Paragraph 2: Opportunities from football ($\frac{3}{4}$ page)

Body Paragraph 3: Health benefits of playing ($\frac{3}{4}$ page)

R

Read it all!

You have already spent this long writing your essay, do not lose points because you missed an obvious typo or did not correct a confusing sentence!!!

While re-reading your paper, it is helpful to:

- Read your paper all the way through!
- Read it out loud!

T

Technical Requirements

Technical

Once you are happy with your content, it is important to make sure that you meet all of the technical requirements.

Here is a list of some of the things you should check:

- Did you meet the length requirement?
- Did you answer the prompt entirely?
- Does your thesis still match all of your paragraphs?
- Do you have the required amount of sources?

Good luck and don't be afraid to reach out to available resources! Just like sports, writing takes a lot of practice.

