

Essay 1 Notes: Composition

Formal:

Edit (proofread/correct) & *Revise* (do not submit first draft!)

Organization

Tip: **Outline** before writing.

Intro w/ Analytic Thesis Statement

- Briefly *contextualize* **your** discussion, (**do not summarize** text)

Conclusion: **not** redundant (do **not** re-state thesis or “sum up”)

- *insightful*, prospective; opportunity for speculation

- *tip:* comment upon significance of analysis; text within context (historical or present); general context (course/discourse)

Support Discussion

* Logical ORG, **not** chronological

- **do not** follow / model essay on the narrative

Tip: use **Outline** (Topical)

- p'graph unity: Coherent/cogent (logical)

- topical breaks (revise = re-arrange, re-order)

- Transitions (inter-paragraph; *tip:* topic sentences)

- *tip:* Examine with “Macroscopic” and “Microscopic” perspectives

(simultaneously; alternately when **revising**)

Using the text as support / evidence

- *Essential*: include **specific** examples - read *closely* (attentively); avoid **generalizing**
- use **present tense** for examples
- **textual examples** *illustrate, demonstrate, show, display, reveal, suggest, imply, evoke, express*
- these are not all synonyms (*consider distinctions*) - **vary** language (*other than Shift+F7*)

- Alternate use of **direct quotations** & paraphrases

- **Note**: MLA style **citations** (*essential*; **will not pass otherwise**)

- *tip* for selecting direct quotes: significant? (possibly paraphrased?)
- *revision tip*: 1-2 direct quotes per p'graph?

- **Limit** examples; present only as support for analytic points

- **Balance** content (consider % – avoid imbalanced p'graphs)

- **Avoid summary** (of narrative) - *revision tip*: ask yourself, simply describing literal/evident example?

* Consult *Writing About Literature* and online references: **Purdue OWL**

Effective style

(*see online references and suggestions below*)

- Clear, Concise, Precise / Direct

- *tip*: use active voice - *tip*: avoid generalizations
- Concrete examples (textual references); Varied phrasing

- **Formality**: edited & revised

- Free of grammatical errors; redundant and/or repeated points; *non sequiturs* or unclear references
- Language is free of slang, generalizations / stereotypes, offensive terms, and clichés

* *Remember*: “Effective writing is invisible”

(*i.e.* don't impede communication of content/ideas with formal problems)

Effective Style, cont'd

(Handout from GT Lenard, my undergrad American Lit professor)

Finding the Best Writing Style

from: Thomas Siebold's: *Writing the College Application Essay: Ten Steps to Success*

Suggestion One: USE THE ACTIVE VOICE FOR LIVELY, READABLE SENTENCES

Active: My junior English teacher organized a book discussion group. (9)

Passive: A book discussion group was organized by my junior English teacher. (11)

Suggestion Two: REDUCE THE NUMBER OF SENTENCES USING 'TO BE' VERBS. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, USE ACTIVE VERBS.

The amount is in excess of the maximum.

Revised: The amount exceeds the maximum.

Suggestion Three: ELIMINATE CIRCUMLOCUTIONS AND REDUNDANCES.

Circumlocutions are roundabout ways of saying something.

Circumlocution	Concise expression
it is often the case that	often
in the event that	if
make contact with	meet

A redundancy is a statement that offers the same meaning more than once.

Yellow (in color); (deliberate) lie; large (in size); adequate (enough)

Suggestion Four: CHOOSE CONCRETE, SPECIFIC WORDS OVER ABSTRACT, GENERAL WORDS.

General: "nice" Concrete: "energetic, gracious, cordial, refined, captivating, persuasive"

Suggestion Five: AVOID USING CLICHES, JARGON, NEGATIVES, SLANG, AND OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE.

Cliché: I have worked with youngsters *from every walk of life*.

Jargon: As a teacher, he has a *massive ego fixation*.

Negatives: After one visit, you *aren't unsure* of quality of campus life.

Slang: I was able to *psych out* most of my teachers.

Offensive Language: Life most of my female teachers, she would back down when confronted.

Suggestion Six: USE A VARIETY OF SENTENCE STRUCTURES FOR EMPHASIS.

Gain emphasis by varying the length of your sentences.

Gain emphasis by varying the beginnings of sentences.

Gain emphasis by using a subordinate clause.

No subordination: I was worried about my injury and I didn't play in the game.

Subordination: Because I was worried about my injury, I didn't play in the game.

Suggestion Seven: WRITE CONCISELY. CUT OUT ANY EXTRA WORDS OR EXPRESSIONS.

Example: It must be remembered that my economic situation had a negative influence throughout my high school years on my out-of-school academic study level. (25)

Revised: All through high school the lack of money infringed on my study time. (13)

Suggestion Eight: DEVELOP SMOOTH TRANSITIONS WITHIN AND BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS.

Use transitional devices:

The use of pronouns that refer to antecedents in preceding sentences.

The repetition of key words or concepts used in preceding sentences.

The use of transitional expressions: furthermore, nevertheless, since.

The use of demonstrative adjectives (this, that) to link objects or ideas in preceding sentences.

The development of repeated sentence patterns.