



Writing Workshop - Essay #1 Basics

Writing Workshop - Essay #1

Type: Descriptive Essay using the Exemplification rhetorical style

Topic: One character point of a person you know well

Length: 5 paragraphs, 1100 ~ 1300 words

Paragraph length: Minimum 15 sentences each for body paragraphs

Paragraph content: Two specific examples per paragraph

Research: Not necessary (use information you know)

Definitions:

- **Character Point:** the way a person acts. For example: *lazy, humorous, stubborn, crazy, determined, stylish, clumsy, arrogant, imaginative, impolite*, and so on.
- The character point must be *specific*: do not use general or vague character points such as *nice, strong, interesting, or noticeable*.
- The character point must be about who they are, not what they do; do not use such topics as *my bother likes cars* or *my classmate has many jobs*.
- There must be only *one* character point for the whole essay; do not use a thesis statement such as *My mother is cautious and determined*. That would be two points.

- **Examples:** stories which are examples of the character points. Use two examples per paragraph, six total for the body paragraphs. **All examples must be events that you witnessed yourself, not just events that you heard about.**
- Each example should be a minimum of 7 sentences long: one sentence to summarize / introduce the example, and 6 or more sentences to tell the story.
- Use only *very specific stories* about events which *happened at one time*. Do *not* tell about how the person *always, usually, often, or sometimes* does something. If the character does it often, then *choose one time that it happened* and explain that event.
- You may have *only one* sentence for background information in each example; an example cannot be 5 sentences of background information and then one sentence about the actual event.
- Each example must focus as much as possible on the person you are writing about. Do not write sentences about how other people reacted or what they said. The person who is your essay focus should be the subject of most sentences in the paragraph.
- Do not write examples of things that *do not* happen. Each example must describe with great detail; if you write that *my friend never says anything impolite*, how can you write any details? All examples must be active. *My friend is overly polite* would be better.

- **Paragraph Variation:** Although the essay focuses on a single character point, you must have *three different variations* on the character point, one variation for each body paragraph. For example, if your thesis statement's character point is *My brother is lazy*, then your three body paragraphs must each focus on a different *aspect* or *type* of laziness. For example: *he leaves the house in a complete mess; he waits until the last minute to do his homework; and he demands that other people do tasks for him*.
- Both examples in a paragraph must be about similar events, but not the same events. *My brother's room is a stinking trash dump* and *The kitchen was a disaster after he cooked dinner last week* could be two examples. Two examples which are too similar would be, for example, *My bother made a huge mess when he cooked spaghetti* and *My brother left the kitchen a mess after a simple breakfast*—those examples would be too similar.

Essay Goals

The major goals of this essay will be:

- To teach you the **form, length, and style** of an academic essay
- To make you aware of the importance of **giving examples** as evidence
- To stress the importance of adding as much **descriptive detail** as possible
- To stress the importance of **proofreading** before a final essay is submitted

The **Topic** will be **one character point of a person you know**. You will brainstorm all of the people you know well, and list their character points. You will choose a person from that group who has an interesting character point. More importantly, **you must be able to describe, in detail, several stories about that person which are examples of that one character point**.

For example, if your choice is your best friend, and you have dozens of experiences with that friend in which they show the character point of being **clever**, then your essay will tell **six stories** which show very clearly how clever your friend is.

The stories must not all be the same. For instance, you may not tell six stories which are all about how that person solved similar math problems. Each story must be different.

More importantly, there must be at least three different **aspects** to the character point: three different **ways** in which the person is clever. For example, that person may be *clever* in:

1. finding problems that no one else can see
2. creating new and efficient ways to do a job
3. negotiating solutions to disagreements

In the above example:

- A. all three aspects are different
- B. each one supports the main idea
- C. each aspect could have two or more specific stories which give examples for it

That's the kind of idea that you will need to look for.

When you find your **aspects**, you must be careful that they **do not overlap**: two aspects should not include the same area, so one story would fit into both aspects. As part of this, **no aspect should be far more general/vague than the others**. For example, what if one of the aspects above were, "My friend is clever in solving problems"? That is no good, because *all* of the aspects are about solving problems. In fact, "My friend is clever in solving problems" could be a more specific *thesis statement*, not an aspect.

In fact, once you have your aspects, **revise your thesis statement**. In the example I give, I could restate the thesis statement to be: "My friend is very clever at solving problems at his job." I could even restate it as, "My friend is a clever leader at work."

GRADING

There will be five basic steps in writing essays in this class. Each step will be graded separately:

Step	Explanation	Grade Weight
Step #1	Submit brainstorming and ideas for your thesis statement, with three (3) topic sentences, and a total of six (6) supporting examples;	5% (of essay score)
Step #2	Submit a mini outline and a full outline for the essay;	5%
Step #3	Submit a first draft with an introduction and three body paragraphs (conclusion optional);	15%
Step #4	Submit a second draft (complete, with conclusion);	25%
Step #5	Submit a final draft (complete, 1000 words or more).	50%

Each individual assignment will be laid out clearly in the pages following this. **The specific grading for the three drafts** will be made specific in the instructions in the following pages.

- **The first draft emphasizes structure, organization, coherence (flow), and unity;**
- **The second draft emphasizes sentence structure, style, and clarity;** and
- **The final draft emphasizes proofreading, revising, and grammar.**

All drafts score heavily for details and development.

Here is a breakdown for how I will score Essay 1, Draft 1 (E1D1):

Introduction & Conclusion:	10%
Coherence / Flow:	10%
Paragraph Structure:	20%
Unity / Support:	20%
Details:	30%
Other considerations:	10%
Following instructions:	<up to -10%>
Lateness / Late Start:	<up to -100%>

Here is the grading breakdown for the Essay 1, Draft 2 (E1D2):

Intro. / Conc. Improvement:	5%
Coherence / Flow Improvement:	5%
Paragraph Structure Improvement:	5%
Style:	10%
Clarity:	15%
Details Improvement:	20%
Sentence Structure:	30%
<u>Other considerations:</u>	<u>10%</u>
Following instructions:	<up to -10%>
Lateness / Late Start:	<up to -100%>

Here is the grading breakdown for the Essay 1, Draft 3 (E1D3):

Intro. / Conc. Improvement:	5%
Coherence / Flow Improvement:	5%
Paragraph Structure Improvement:	5%
Style Improvement:	5%
Clarity Improvement:	5%
Details Improvement:	5%
Sentence Structure Improvement:	10%
Grammar Correction:	50%
<u>Other considerations:</u>	<u>10%</u>
Following instructions:	<up to -10%>
Lateness / Late Start:	<up to -100%>

Notice that you can lose points for not following instructions, working late, or submitting the draft late.

The list of main steps for this assignment:

- Brainstorm a clustered map of the people you know and their character points
- Select the best **person** and **one character point** to be the topic of Essay #1
- Submit the topic candidate and a list of at least a dozen stories about them
- Divide the stories about that person's character into aspects (categories)
- Create a Mini outline
- Create a Full outline
- Brainstorm introduction and conclusion techniques
- Brainstorm vocabulary
- Plan your writing schedule
- Write a first draft
- Respond to my markup on the first draft
- Write a second draft
- Respond to my markup on the second draft
- Write a final draft
- Respond to my markup on the final draft
- Write a portfolio draft

In the end, the total score for Essay #1 will be 25% of your total grade for the class.

In this class, I will grade heavily on **providing details** and **correcting grammar**, and these are the top problems with many students in this class.

ESSAY WORK

Something which is very important: **I expect you to work hard on every part of this assignment, especially the essay drafts.** If I give you 10 days to write a draft, but then you start working on the draft one day before the due date, **then I will not take your work seriously.**

Each draft will require a great deal of work. I require at least **2 full hours** of work on the 1st draft, at least **3 hours** of work on the 2nd draft, and **4 hours** of work on the final draft.

You cannot do this all on one day. You must break up your work over several days. This technique makes it easier to do the work, and makes it easier to approach each part. Instead of putting off one huge task because it will be too hard, you can do one small piece of work every day for a week. Instead of writing a whole draft in one day, write one paragraph per day. Instead of checking all of your grammar at once, check for article errors one day, verb tense errors another day, and so on.

The first day you receive an essay draft assignment, plan what work you must do, and then make a schedule for it, dividing the work into pieces.

I will be checking the amount of time you spend writing each draft!