**English 125, College Writing Skills—Monday and Wednesday**

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Office Hours: Tuesday from 10:00-10:50, Thursday from 10:00-10:50, and Friday form 10:00-11:20.

Required Texts: Please purchase the following texts at the Reedley College bookstore ASAP. *Handbook Of Literary Terms*, Kennedy (publisher Longman, ISBN 0-205-60356-4); *The Packinghouse Review* Vol 3 Number 5, Garza and Dominguez, ISBN 1-4663-3036-8; *Webster's New World Pocket Dictionary*, Webster (publisher Idg Books, ISBN 0-7645-6147-2); and *Pocket Thesaurus, Merriam Webster* (ISBN 0-87779-524-X). Once the books are in the bookstore, bring the required texts to class every day.

**Changes to the Syllabus/Calendar:**

The instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary for the benefit of the class, to change policies on the syllabus, or dates on the calendar. Missing class is not an excuse for not being aware of any changes that are made to the calendar or the syllabus.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a verified need for an academic accommodation or materials in alternate media (i.e., Braille, large print, electronic text, etc.) per the Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Course Description:**

In this course, students will develop the process of writing, revising, and finishing essays, which includes the logical development and organization of ideas. Students will avoid common writing errors, develop their writing skills by reading model essays and analyzing rhetorical strategies, develop critical thinking skills by matching the structures of writing to meaning and audience, and by using writing as thinking to explore and express ideas. This course is a companion to ENGL 126 and prepares students for ENGL 1A. Students must successfully complete written course work to receive credit.

**Course Outcomes—Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:**

1. Write an essay of at least 750 words which include an introduction, multiple body paragraphs, and conclusion of some sophistication. This essay will include:

* a clearly defined thesis statement
* unified supporting paragraphs, which begin with topic sentences
* quotations that support the topic sentences and the thesis
* complete sentences which include a variety of sentence types (simple, compound, complex, and compound/complex sentence)
* descriptive vocabulary that exhibits growth and sophisticated word choice
* avoidance of fragments, comma splices, sentence fuses and other basic skills errors, such as capitalization, spelling, homophone issues, verb tense issues, subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, word choice issues, confused syntax, etc.
* use of MLA guidelines to set up essays, correctly use in-text citations for at least one source, and complete a works cited page
* writing that is free from plagiarism
* demonstrated awareness of how to write from the 3rd person point of view for a specific audience

1. Plan and revise independently, employing all stages of the writing process as necessary and appropriate.
2. Complete a multi-paragraph in-class essay with a thesis and support.

**Course Objectives—In the process of completing this course, students will:**

1. Complete a multi-paragraph in-class essay with a thesis and support.
2. Learn about writing papers which include introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions.
3. Learn to write with some sophistication.
4. Practice writing thesis statements.
5. Practice writing topic sentences.
6. Learn about using quotations and in-text citations that support the topic sentences and the thesis.
7. Practice developing supporting material that exhibits critical thinking.
8. Develop an understanding of what a complete sentence is and practice using a variety of sentence types (simple, compound, complex, and compound/complex sentence).
9. Learn about common sentence errors, such as fragments, comma splices, sentence fuses.
10. Develop their usage of descriptive vocabulary that exhibits growth and sophisticated word choice.
11. Learn how to follow MLA guidelines when formatting papers and using quotations and a works cited page.
12. Learn about avoiding plagiarism.
13. Write papers in which they will use 3rd person point of view and practice addressing a specific audience.
14. Practice using all stages of the writing process as necessary and appropriate practice writing in-class essays.

**Course Content:**

1. Using the writing process:
2. prewriting strategies
3. outlining
4. drafting
5. revising
6. editing
7. Writing a well-developed essay:
8. introduction
9. thesis statements
10. body paragraphs
11. topic sentences
12. supporting details
13. transitions
14. concluding paragraphs
15. coherent development
16. focus
17. organization
18. unification
19. Thinking critically:
20. analyze ideas
21. use supporting details to validate a thesis
22. Writing sentences:
23. sentence variety
24. simple sentences
25. compound sentences
26. complex sentences
27. compound complex sentences
28. crafting sentences
29. using parallelism
30. eliminating wordiness
31. avoiding and correcting sentence errors
32. fragments
33. run-ons (comma splices and sentence fuses)
34. punctuation
35. the comma
36. the semicolon
37. the colon
38. the dash
39. Understanding purpose, audience, voice:
40. awareness of audience
41. academic language use
42. third person point of view
43. Using MLA guidelines:
44. avoid plagiarism
45. set-up an essay
46. cite direct quotations
47. write a works cited page

**Semester Grading:**

First essay (in-class):

a. 100 points.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Second essay (in-class):

a. 100 points each.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Third essay (in-class):

a. 100 points each.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Mid-term grammer exam:

a. 50 points.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Fourth essay (out-of-class):

a. 100 points.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Final grammar exam:

a. 50 points.

b. Graded based on the course outcomes and on your ability to follow directions.

Semester Grading Scale: A=500-450; B=449-400; C=399-350; D=349-300; F=299-00

**Extra Credit:**

Extra credit will be offered during the semester. When you turn it in, I will put it in my extra credit folder. At the end of the semester, I will calculate final grades; if you have earned a “C” or higher because of how you have done on the required course work, I will then add your extra credit to your final grade. Thus, the extra credit will not raise a final semester grade of an “F” or a “D.” It can, however, raise your final grade from a “C” to a “B” or from a “B” to an “A.”

**Revision Symbols:**

The symbols listed below indicate areas of writing that may need to be improved in your work. These symbols will be used by me to mark your composition:

th = thesis

sm = supportive material

tr = transition

ts = topic sentence

cn = context

dq = direct quotation

mla = citing direct quotations

ct = critical thinking

ct/1 = critical thinking, step 1

ct/2 = critical thinking, step 2

kw(s) = key word(s)

fs = final statement

f = fragment

cs = comma splice

sf = sentence fuse

fd = follow directions

bs = basic skills

? = confusing

= take out

= insert

= good writing

= writing needs to improve

syn = syntax--the words you choose to express a thought and the order you put those words in

to form a sentence.

ALSO, if any words are circled, you have a basic skill error, which may include, but is not limited to, problems with spelling, word choice, verb tense, subject verb agreement, pronoun agreement, the apostrophe, capitalization, and indicating the titles of works.

**English 125 Essay Rubric—These guidelines will be used to grade your essays:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Content** | **Organization** | **Conventions** |
| **A** | * Strong thesis statement * Strong topic sentences in all body paragraphs * Strong examples/details/reasons that are well-chosen, thoughtful, original and balanced which support the thesis * Overall essay is cohesive * Thoughtfully, thoroughly addresses the essay prompt * Meets or exceeds essay’s requirements | * Strong essay structure with strong introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion * Strong paragraph structure * Strong use of transitions within the paragraphs and between paragraphs * A strong sense of logic in the paragraph’s organization | * Sophisticated, varied sentence structure * Excellent control of sentence structure * Few if any surface errors (spelling, mechanics, punctuation) none of which interfere with understanding * Accurate, concise word choice * MLA formatting followed with very few if any errors * Citations used for all words and ideas not writer’s own * Textual evidence has strong signal phrases and correct parenthetical citations |
| **B** | * Clear thesis statement * Clear topic sentences in all body paragraphs * Clear examples/details/reasons that are mostly well-chosen, original, and balanced which support the thesis * There is basic essay unity * Addresses the essay prompt * Meets most of the essay’s requirements | * Good essay structure, with a clear introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion * Good paragraph structure * Good use of transitions within the paragraphs and between paragraphs * Good sense of logic in organization | * Sentence structure is varied at times * Good control of sentence structure * Minor surface errors that do not interfere with understanding * Few diction and word choice problems * MLA formatting followed with few errors * Citations used for all words and ideas not writer’s own with slight errors * Textual evidence has signal phrases connected to quotations and correct parenthetical citations with slight errors |
| **C** | * An identifiable but weak thesis statement * Adequate topic sentences * Adequate supporting examples/reasons /details which are present, although limited, too general, or unbalanced * Some suggestion of unified content * Adequately addresses the essay prompt * Meets many of the essay’s requirements | * Adequate introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion * Adequate paragraph structure * Some use of transitions within the paragraphs and between paragraphs * A basic sense of organization, perhaps with some discrepancies in logic | * Attempts made at times to vary sentence structure * Adequate control of sentence structure, although there may be errors * Some surface errors that do not interfere with understanding * Some word choice errors that do not hinder understanding * MLA formatting followed adequately * Citations mostly used for all words and ideas not writer’s own. Writer may be a little confused about rules. * Most of the textual evidence have signal phrases connected to quotations and parenthetical citations with errors |
| **D** | * Missing or weak thesis statement * Missing or unclear topic sentences * Supporting examples/details/reasons present, but are weak, poorly developed, disconnected from the thesis, repetitive, or very unbalanced * The content is not unified * Attempts to address the essay prompt, but only answers part of the question or appears to misunderstand the prompt * Does not meet most of the essay’s requirements | * Weak organization (perhaps missing an introduction or conclusion paragraph) * Weakly organized paragraph structure * Few or improperly used transitions * Little sense of organization, with major discrepancies in logic | * Simplistic sentence structure * Limited control over sentence structure * Significant surface errors that may interfere with understanding * Significant word choice errors that may hinder meaning * MLA formatting followed inadequately * Errors in following citation rules * Most of the textual evidence used are missing signal phrases |
| **F** | * Essay is incomplete or doesn’t address the prompt | * No sense of organization * Missing an introduction, body paragraphs, or conclusion * No use of transitions | * Lack of control over sentence structure * Major problems with surface errors that obscure meaning * Numerous and significant word choice errors that obscure meaning * No MLA formatting * Lack of citations or major mistakes * No signal phrases used before or after quotations (or no textual evidence provided) |

**Absences, Being Tardy, Being Dropped from the Course, Adding the Course:**

* **Being dropped from the course:** If you miss the second day of class, you will be automatically dropped from the course. You will be dropped from the course if you are absent five times or more before the official drop deadline (10/12/2012). If you are late, you’ll be considered absent; you are tardy if you come to class after I’ve taken roll.
* **Adding:** To add the class, you must attend every class meeting until you have been officially added to the roster. You must add the class by the end of the second week, or you will not be added.

**Academic Behavior:**

According to the Reedley College *Student Conduct Standards and Procedures*, if a student “Interferes with or disrupts faculty and administrators who are fulfilling their professional responsibilities that student is subject to discipline” (4). Such behavior includes anything that I find disruptive. Cell phones ringing/vibrating during class, texting, being late to class, walking in and out of the classroom during lecture, and leaving class early are considered disruptive. Not bringing your texts to class, not participating constructively, and talking while I’m presenting lecture are also considered disruptive. Students who are disruptive will be suspended by me for 1-2 class meetings. If that student continues to be disruptive, he/she will be referred to the dean of students who reserves the right to suspend the student for 10 additional class meetings. Consider yourselves warned.

**Completing Assignments and Missing Deadlines:**

All assignments must be completed on the given due dates. If you miss a deadline, you will receive a zero on the assignment. If you are unable to complete an assignment due to an emergency, I may consider a make-up assignment if you are able to present appropriate documentation. Emergencies may or may not include sickness, injury, bereavement of an immediate family member, or a court appearance. Missing class is never an excuse for missing an assignment.

**Plagiarism:**

If you are caught plagiarizing any work, you may receive an automatic “F” on the assignment, in the class, or dropped from the course, with the appropriate grade, and referred to campus administration.

**Course Outline (subject to change):**

August

* Tuesday the 14th: how to write complete sentences and avoid fragments. Homework: read the entire syllabus to become familiar with the course AND read chapter 7 in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and chapter 10 pages 34-43 in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.*
* Thursday the 16th: how to join independent clauses and avoid comma splices and sentence fuses.
* Tuesday the 21st: how to write a variety of sentences.
* Thursday the 23rd: how to use the comma.
* Tuesday the 28th: how to write an essay.
* **Thursday the 30th: in-class essay #1.** Homework: read all poetry in *The Packinghouse Review*.

September

* Tuesday the 4th: how to write essay #2. Essay #2 will focus on poetry.
* Thursday the 6th: how to write essay #2.
* Tuesday the 11th: how to write essay #2.
* Thursday the 13th: how to write essay #2.
* Tuesday the 18th: how to write essay #2.
* Thursday 20th: how to write essay #2.
* Tuesday 25th: how to write essay #2.
* **Thursday the 27th: in-class essay #2 first draft.**

October

* **Tuesday the 2nd: in-class essay #2 final revision.** Homework: read all nonfiction in *The Packinghouse Review*.
* Thursday the 4th: how to write essay #3. Essay #3 will focus on nonfiction.
* Tuesday the 9th: how to write essay #3.
* Thursday the 11th: how to write essay #3.
* Tuesday the 16th: how to write essay #3.
* Thursday the 18th: how to write essay #3.
* Tuesday the 23rd: how to write essay #3.
* Thursday the 25th: **In-class essay #3 first draft.**
* Tuesday the 30th: **In-class essay #3 final revision.**

November

* **Thursday the 1st: Midterm, grammar exam.** Homework: read all fiction in *The Packinghouse Review.*
* Tueday the 6th: how to write essay #4. Essay #4 will focus on fiction.
* Thursday the 8th: how to write essay #4.
* Tuesday the 13th: how to write essay #4.
* Thursday the 15th: how to write essay #4.
* Tuesday the 20th: how to write essay #4.
* Thursday the 22nd: No class meeting. Thanksgiving.
* Tuesday the 27th: how to write essay #4.
* **Thursday the 29th: how to write essay #4. Essay #4 assigned (out-of-class).**

December

* **Tuesday the 4th: essay #4 due at the beginning of class.** Prepare for final grammar exam.
* Thursday the 6th: prepare for final grammar exam.
* Tuesday the 11th: No class meeting.
* **Thursday the 13th: Final grammar exam. Same time and place.**

**Lecture NotesHow to Write Complete Sentences**

**I. Understanding Complete Sentences**

A. A complete sentence is a group of words that contains a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. The grammatical term for a complete sentence is “independent clause.”

1. A subject is what the sentence is about.

a. example: Jackson Pollock defined modern American painting. 2. A verb is the action of the sentence.

a. example: Pollock painted in a style inspired by the American Indians.

3. The subject and verb must form a complete thought. To help yourself understand the concept of a complete and logical thought, read the word groups below. Which one(s) contains a complete thought?

a. After the dog ate his food.

b. Because the dog ate his food too fast.

c. Unless the dog is able eat his food slowly.

d. After the dog ate his food, he went outside and played in the leaves.

4. Example “D” is a complete thought. It contains a subject, which is “he”; it contains a verb, which is “went”; and it contains a complete thought: what happened?—the dog went outside and played in the leaves. To recognize whether or not a group of words contains a subject, a verb, and especially a complete thought, you must be a good reader, which is one reason reading is so very important to a young writer.

# II. Avoiding Fragments

A. If a group of words does not contain a subject, a verb, or a complete thought, it is an incomplete sentence. An incomplete sentence is also known as a “fragment.”

B. Occasionally, incomplete sentences begin with one of the following types of words: *after, although, because, before, if, unless, until,* and *when*. These words are called dependent words because the sentence

that they begin will require extra information to be complete. You can begin a sentence with any word that you want as long as you have a subject, a verb, and a complete thought.

C. As writers, you have three ways to correct a fragment:

1. Combine word groups:

a. During the winter months. I mulch the garden with compost.

i. During the winter months, I mulch the garden with compost.

2. Remove dependent words:

a. When I mulch the garden.

i. I mulch the garden.

3. Revise the fragment:

a. When I mulch the garden.

i. When I mulch the garden, my tomato plants produce more fruit during the summer.

**How to Avoid Comma Splices and Sentence Fuses**

**I. Comma Splices**

A. Definition: if two independent clauses are joined with a comma that is not followed by a coordinating conjunction, the sentence is called a “comma splice.” You may place a comma between independent clauses as long as the comma is followed by a coordinating conjunction. There are seven coordinating

conjunctions in the English Language: “and,” “or,” “nor,” “but,” for,” “so,” and “yet.”

**II. Sentence Fuses**

A. Definition: if two independent clauses are joined with neither punctuation nor a coordinating conjunction, the sentence is called a “sentence fuse.”

**III. Examples of Comma Splices and Sentence Fuses**

A. Identify which are comma splices and which are sentence fuses. Explain why each example

represents a particular type of sentence error.

1. Today I cut the lawn, it was very green.

2. Today I cut the lawn, and it was very green, my father was pleased.

3. I’m going to help my father build a fence the old one is infested with termites.

4. I’m going to help my father build a fence, for the old one is infested with termites the posts are

rotten.

**IV. How to Join Together Independent Clauses Correctly and Thus Avoid Comma Splices and Sentence Fuses**

A. Join together independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction. There are seven coordinating conjunctions in the English Language: “and,” “or,” “nor,” “but,” for,” “so,” and “yet.”

1. Last night, I sprayed the grape vines with soap, and my wife pruned the fig trees.

B. Join together independent clauses with a semicolon if the independent clauses are closely related.

1. My wife and I love working in the yard every evening; the work releases day’s stress.

C. Join together independent clauses with a colon if the second independent clause summarizes or explains the first independent clause.

1. During the summer months, the dogs dig holes under the Sequoias and fall asleep: the cold dirt soothes their panting heart throughout the afternoon.

D. Join together independent clauses with a dash to add emphasis to the second independent clause.

1. The blackberry vines are bursting with blossoms—the fruit will be sweet and plentiful.

E. Join together independent clauses with a period.

1. The plum trees need to be pruned. The nectarine trees are already budding.

**V. Test**

A. How many independent clauses do you see in the sentence below? Are they joined together correctly?

1. Today I cut the lawn, and it was very green, so my father was pleased.

**How to Use the Comma**

**I. The Rules**

A. Use the comma after a subordinate phrase or clause that is followed by an (IC). A subordinate clause contains a subject and a verb. A subordinate phrase contains one or neither. Subordinate word groups tell who, where, why, how, or under what conditions the main part of the sentence took place. Subordinate words groups *can’t* stand alone as an (IC).

1. After I got home from school, I took a very long nap.

2. After school, I took a very long nap.

B. Use the comma with a (CC) to join (ICs).

1. I drove home after school, and I took a nap.

2. After school, I drove home and took a nap, for I was exhausted.

C. Use the comma to join items in a series. A series includes at least three items. Place the comma before each item to prevent confusion.

1. After school, I drove home, took a nap, and ate dinner.

D. Use commas to set off parenthetical information. Parenthetical information appears in the middle of a sentence. The information is parenthetical if it can be removed without changing the meaning the sentence.

1. I took a nap, because I was exhausted, after school.

E. Use the comma to set off nonessential information that begins with the word “which,” “such as,” or “who.”

1. My truck is white, which is a very easy color to maintain.

F. Use commas to set off nouns of direct address. A noun of direct address is usually some one or some thing that is being spoken to.

1. Andy, what did you do after school, for the house was a mess?

G. Use the comma to separate sharply contrasting elements. Sharply contrasting elements are often defined by words such as “not” and “unlike.”

1. I want to go home and study, not sleep.

H. Use commas after or around transitional phrases including, but not limited to, “unfortunately,” “thus,” “still,” “in addition,” “however,” and “instead.”

1. I want to go home and take a nap; instead, I’m going to study.

2. I went to school and still worked-out.

I. Use a comma after a fragment introducing a short direct quotation.

1. Luis Rodriguez said, “reading saved my life.”

**How to Write a Variety of Sentences**

**Introduction**: To know how to write a variety sentences, you must understand three basic syntactical units: the subordinate phrase, the subordinate clause, and the independent clause. Once you understand these sentence parts, you can learn how to write the different types of sentences: simple, complex, compound, and complex compound. *By understanding how to write these types of sentences, you will become a better writer, for the sentence is the most important organizational unit that a writer uses. In other words, you will be able to articulate sophisticated ideas clearly so that your reader will understand your thoughts.*

I. There are three syntactical units: the subordinate phrase, the subordinate clause, and the independent clause.

A. **The subordinate phrase** is a group of words that cannot stand alone as a sentence; thus, it is a fragment. Subordinate phrases do not contain both a subject and verb. Subordinate phrases tell who, where, how, why, when, or under what conditions the main part of the sentence took place. The main part of the sentence is the part of the sentence that can stand alone as a complete sentence. Subordinate phrases can be at the beginning of a sentence or at the end of a sentence.

1. While at the library, I was able to study for my final exam.

2. I washed my car after work.

B. **The subordinate clause** is also a group of words that cannot stand alone as a sentence; thus, it is a fragment. Subordinate clauses do contain both a subject and verb. Subordinate clauses also tell who, where, how, why, when, or under what conditions the main part of the sentence took place. Remember, the main part of the sentence is the part of the sentence that can stand alone as a complete sentence. Like subordinate phrases, subordinate clauses can be at the beginning of a sentence or at the end of a sentence.

1. Because I woke up early, I enjoyed a healthy breakfast before my round of golf.

2. This winter, I’m going to enjoy freshly squeezed orange juice unless the frost ruins the fruit trees in my backyard.

C. **The independent clause** is a group of words that contains a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. It can stand alone as a complete sentence.

1. I love a good cup of coffee.

2. The Dallas Cowboys are the greatest football team ever.

II. There are four types of sentences: simple, complex, compound, and complex compound. These four types of sentences are written by combing together the different types of syntactical units.

A. **The simple sentence** contains one independent clause and no subordinate word groups.

1. The Los Angeles Dodgers are the greatest baseball team ever.

2. I drive a 1966 Chevy pickup truck.

B. **The complex sentence** contains at least one subordinate phrase or subordinate clause plus exactly one independent clause.

1*. I worked at Red Carpet Carwash* while in college.

2. After I picked tomatoes and jalapenos in the garden, *I made fresh salsa.*

C. **The compound sentence** contains at least two independent clauses and no subordinate word groups.

1. *One of my favorite poetry books is The Sky by Christopher Buckley*, and *one of my favorite novels is Hunger by Knut Hamsun*.

2. *I was starving at work*, but *my wallet was empty.*

D. **The complex compound sentence** contains at least one subordinate phrase or subordinate clause plus at least two independent clauses.

1. After I worked out, *I took a shower*, and *then, we ate dinner.*

2. While my brother and I were playing golf, *it started raining*, but *we didn’t care and finished our round.*

**Conclusion:** By mastering these types of sentences, a person can control the rhythm of his writing. If a person writes a poem that contains mostly one or two sentence types, the rhythm becomes monotonous. A conscientious writer, however, uses all of sentence structures to prevent monotony and, most importantly, to organize and present his ideas as clearly as possible. This scrupulous attention to the writing process shows respect for the reader.

**How to Write a Simple Summary—for Essay 1**

1. Select a focal point for your essay. Focus your essay on a theme that you believe best reflects the reading material. A theme is a main idea that runs throughout the reading, such as family.
2. Write a thesis. Make your thesis one well-written sentence. Make your thesis the first sentence of your essay.
3. To write your thesis, follow these simple steps:
   * Read the essay topic carefully.
   * Identify key words in the essay topic.
   * Identify what the topic specifically requires.
   * Use those key words to address the topic and write your thesis.
   * Do not simply rewrite the topic.
   * Here is a sample thesis: The most important theme in *Zorba the Greek* by Nikos Kazantzakis is family.
4. After you have written your thesis, you are ready to write the rest of the introduction. Select three passages from the reading that support your thesis. Write three sentences that describe your supportive material. In other words, write one sentence for each of these passages, which you will carefully develop in the body of the essay.
5. Now you are ready to write the body of the essay. The body will contain three paragraphs. Each paragraph will focus on *one* of the passages that you described in the introduction. Each of these three paragraphs must follow these simple steps:
   * Begin the paragraph with a topic sentence that contains your key words. If you were focusing on the theme of family, your topic sentence would include the words “theme” and “family,” and it would mention which passage the paragraph is going to describe to support the thesis. Here is a sample topic sentence: One example of the theme, which is family, is when Zorba dances on the beach with his best friend.
   * CAREFULLY describe ONE passage from the reading to support your thesis. First summarize the paragraph (at least 4 sentences), then write a clearly defined transitional sentence, then analyze one specific part of the passage (at least 5 sentences). You must use your own diction and syntax or you are guilty of plagiarism. Remember, keep the book closed. Do not use direct quotations—use only your words.
6. After you have written the introduction and the three supporting paragraphs, you are ready to write the conclusion. To write the conclusion, follow these steps:
   * Restate the thesis word for word. Make the thesis the first sentence in your conclusion.
   * Write three sentences that review your supportive material. DO NOT copy the sentences from the introduction; show me a variety of diction and syntax.
   * Write a final statement. The final statement tells the reader why the subject of your essay is important. To write a good final statement, you have to sit and think.
7. Show me good basic writing skills, good sentences, good reading comprehension, and the ability to follow directions.
8. Make sure you avoid rookie errors, such as misspelling the author’s name, referring to the author by his/her first name, using first or second person (this means stay in third person at all times), using clichés, making formatting errors, not knowing when the punctuation marks belong inside quotation marks verses outside quotation marks, not following directions.

# How to Write a Successful Thesis Sentence—for Essays 2-4

**I. The Steps:**

1. Read the essay topic carefully.
2. Identify **key words** in the essay topic.
3. Identify what the topic specifically requires.
4. Use those key words to address what the essay topic specifically requires and write your **thesis** sentence.
5. Make your thesis sentence the first sentence in your introduction.
6. Do not simply rewrite the topic.

How to Write Paragraphs in an Essay

**I. How to Write an Introductory Paragraph**

1. Make your thesis the first sentence of your introduction. Your thesis must be expressed in *one* well-written sentence.
2. Carefully list your **supportive material** in a series of well-written sentences. Write one sentence for each paragraph in the body of the essay. Each of these sentences must focus precisely on the part of the direct quotation that you are going to examine in the body of the essay. That part of the quotation must be in quotation marks and should be in the form of a word or a phrase. In other words, words, be very focused.

**II. How to Write a Paragraph in the Body of the Essay**

1. Write a **topic sentence** to establish the paragraph’s focal point. Use all your key words in the topic sentence. Make sure your topic is a clear reflection of the supportive material listed in your introduction by addressing the specific part of the direct quotation that you are going to examine in the critical thinking. Put that specific part of the direct quotation in quotation marks.
2. Establish the **context** of your supportive material. Your context must include at least four well-written sentences. The context describes what was taking place in the original text before the direct quotation. Use your own diction and syntax!
3. Support your topic sentence with a **direct quotation**.
4. Explain the significance of your direct quotation with **CRITICAL THINKING**. Your critical thinking must contain at least five well-written sentences. Do not begin a paragraph with a direct quotation. Do not end a paragraph with a direct quotation. To write your critical thinking, follow these three steps:
   1. Begin the critical thinking with a sentence that reinforces the key words—use the actual key words. (For the rest of the critical thinking, feel free to use synonyms).
   2. Carefully analyze the most important part of the direct quotation by explaining how it supports your thesis. Place that important part in quotation marks.
   3. IF you need to push your critical thinking in order to support your thesis, repeat step two.

## **III. How to Write a Concluding Paragraph**

1. Restate your thesis. Copy and paste it. Make it the first sentence in your introduction.
2. Restate your supportive material. Write one sentence per paragraph in the body of the essay. Do not copy and paste; rather, show a variety of sentence structure.
3. Make a **final statement**. Use the literary devices to craft the final statement. The final statement is pure critical thinking. It must reach beyond the thesis and explain why your essay is important. Consider using concrete images from the appropriate reading to allegorically represent your point.

**MLA Format Checklist**

**Thanks to Reedley College English Instructor Carey Karle for This List**

All essays must be formatted according to Modern Language Association guidelines. Any paper that is not correctly formatted as noted may receive no higher than 79% on their essay.

* Font set for TIMES NEW ROMAN 12
* Line spacing set for DOUBLE
  + Entire essay is DOUBLE line spaced only—no more and no less ANYWHERE
  + In the PARAGRAPH menu, set the SPACING **BEFORE** and **AFTER** for ZERO
* Margins are set for one inch (1”) top and bottom, left and right.
* Page numbers have been INSERTED (not typed) into the upper right hand corner beginning with page one.
* Student’s last name appears before the page number—AND there is a space between the name and page number
* On page one ONLY, in the top left hand corner of the page, double line spaced, the following appears
  + Student’s Name
  + Instructor Dominguez
  + Course
  + Due Date for Essay
* Next, the essay has an appropriate title, which is centered—USING the computer’s function to center (not tabbed or spaced into the center)
* The first line of each paragraph is indented using the tab function AND the tab is set for 0.5” (one half inch)
* The work(s) cited page/annotated bibliography is the last page of the essay—INSERT NEW PAGE
  + Works Cited utilizes a hanging indent as needed
  + Works Cited entries are alphabetized by the author’s last name
  + Works Cited entries are formatted correctly

**How to Use MLA Author Named in a Signal Phrase to Cite Prose**

## **I. Quotations, Signal Phrases, and Page Numbers**

## Limit your quotation to four lines.

## Introduce a quotation using a signal phrase. There are a variety of possible signal phrases. Following are several key words: stated, said, says, believed, expressed. The signal phrase should also contain either the name of the author or the name of the speaker.

## Follow the quotation with the appropriate page number inside a set of parentheses. Finish the citation with a period.

## Here is an example of a direct quotation cited according to the MLA guidelines:

Esquivel writes about the theme of love by carefully describing a dinner that took place on the ranch. To prepare the dinner, Tita plucked rose petals off their stems to make a sauce. When she plucked them, she scratched herself on the thorns. Drops of blood dripped into the sauce as she thought about Pedro—the man she loved. After she made the sauce, she prepared the quail. Tita was sweating while cooking the quail; as she prepared the quail, she was still thinking about Pedro. When she presented the dinner to her guests, Tita’s blood and sweat magically affected the food. **Esquivel said,** “**I**t was as if a strange alchemical process had dissolved her entire being in the rose petal sauce, in the tender flesh of the quails, in the wine, in every one of the meals **aromas” (52).** **THEN THE CRITICAL THINKING BEGINS HERE FOLLOWED BY THE TRANSITION.**

E. There are several important MLA rules to learn from the example:

1. The quotation is introduced with a comma because the signal phrase is not a complete sentence and because there is an end stop before the quotation.
2. The first letter of the quotation should be capitalized according to the way it appears in the text.
3. Do not begin a quotation with an ellipsis mark; rather, when appropriate, begin a quotation with a lower case letter. You may, however, end a quotation with an ellipsis mark if you end the quotation in the middle of a sentence.
4. The page number is placed outside the quotation marks. Include only the page number inside the parenthesis. Close the sentence with a period outside the parentheses. Please note: there is no punctuation included inside the last set of quotation marks, such as a period or a comma. If the quotation includes an exclamation mark or a question mark, then include either of those forms of punctuation; otherwise, simply use a period after the page number, outside the parentheses.

F. Other MLA formatting issues may come up in class. If so, we will address them during lecture. If you have any questions about citing direct quotations, be sure to ask. These rules (A-E), however, will serve as the backbone.

# How to Use MLA Author Named in a Signal Phrase to Cite Poetry

## **I. Lesson One**

## Limit your direct quotation to three lines or fewer of actual poetry, not how it looks on your screen

## but how it looks in the original text.

## Introduce a quotation using a signal phrase. There are a variety of possible signal phrases. Following are several key words: stated, said, says, believed, expressed. The signal phrase should also contain either the name of the author or the name of the speaker.

## Use the “/” mark to indicate line breaks.

## Follow the quotation with the appropriate page number inside a set of parentheses. Finish the citation with a period.

## Here is an example of a direct quotation cited according to the MLA guidelines:

“Pig” uses the concrete images of a Mack truck and sausage to create a theme of toil. As the poem opens, Abraham Tovar is pulling into the parking lot of a sausage factory. He sees the workers swatting at flies, and he sees how the workers wear their work in the form of blood and fat clinging to their skin. Above the workers is the sun. The heat melts the frozen meat products, making the men even more aware of their surroundings as they sink their hands into the cartons of meat to make sausage. The poet shows the toil of the day when he says, “Mack trucks came in with unprocessed pork/ and took out chorizo, linguica, hot links, and sausage/” (11). **And continue on here with your critical thinking…**

1. There are several important MLA rules to learn from the example:
2. The quotation is introduced with a comma because the signal phrase is not a complete sentence and because there is an end stop before the quotation.
3. The first letter of the quotation should be capitalized according to the way it appears in the text.
4. Do not begin a quotation with an ellipsis mark; rather, when appropriate, begin a quotation with a lower case letter. You may, however, end a quotation with an ellipsis mark if you end the quotation in the middle of a sentence.
5. The page number is placed outside the quotation marks. Include only the page number inside the parenthesis. Close the sentence with a period outside the parentheses. Please note: there is no punctuation included inside the last set of quotation marks, such as a period or a comma. If the quotation includes an exclamation mark or a question mark, then include either of those forms of punctuation; otherwise, simply use a period after the page number, outside the parentheses.

**All other MLA rules,**

**which were reviewed on the previous PAGE, apply**.

**How to Create a Works Cited Page**

**I. Formatting**

* Begin your works cited page on a separate page at the end of your research paper.
* It should have the same one-inch margins and last name, page number header as the rest of your paper.
* Label the page Works Cited (do not italicize the words works cited or put them in quotation marks) and center the words Works Cited at the top of the page.
* Double space all citations, but do not skip spaces between entries.
* Indent the second and subsequent lines of citations five spaces so that you create a hanging indent.
* Entries are listed alphabetically by the author’s name (or, when appropriate, editor names). Author names are written last name first; middle names or middle initials follow the first name.

**II. How to Cite Sources**

* Basic Format for a Book: first, give author’s name. A single author's name appears in last name, first name format. The basic form for a book citation is:

Last name, First name. Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

Medium of Publication.

* An Article in a scholarly journal: author(s). "Title of Article." *Title of Journal* Volume. Issue (Year): pages. Medium of publication:

Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's

Bashai Tudu." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* V15.N1 (1996): 41-50. Print.

Works Cited

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. 26 Aug. 2005. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue University. 23 April 2006. Web.

Sample Works Cited

Barile, Stephen. “Trip to Endora.” *The Packinghouse Review* V2. N2 (2010): 66. Print.

Bolling, Bonnie. “Late Rain Domestic.” *The Packinghouse Review* V2. N2 (2010): 68. Print.

Campos, David. “The Center of a Perfect Mango.” *The Packinghouse Review* V2. N2 (2010): 76. Print.

(Remember, your works cited page will appear on a page by itself).

**Practice Paragraphs**

**Fragments**

**Attending UCLA**

Next year, I want to attend UCLA. Because it will help prepare me for a life’s work in medicine. Since my childhood. I have always wanted to be a doctor. If I major in biology. I will learn a great deal about the human body and how it works. I took several science classes at Long Beach City College. For example, I took physics, chemistry, and environmental science. Since I did exceptionally well in these courses. I am certain that I will continue to do well at UCLA because I am confident, put school first, and work hard. Because I want to spend my life as a doctor. I have volunteered my time at a hospital. At the hospital, which was in an economically disadvantaged area. I learned that a doctor must above all else be compassionate and listen to his patients. I want to learn how to serve my patients well. While attending the UCLA School of Medicine.

**First Job at Bulldog Stadium**

When I was thirteen years old. I started my first job selling snacks in the stands at Bulldog Stadium. The reason I worked at Bulldog Stadium was because I wanted to see the games for free. I quickly learned, however, that if I was going to make any money. I couldn’t stand around and do nothing. At first, I sold only hotdogs. I’d run up and down the stands. Until my legs burned. Of course, stuffing cash into my pockets kept my legs moving. Because I wanted to make more money. I started selling hotdogs and Pepsis simultaneously. I carried a box full of hotdogs. On top of that a tray full of Pepsis. If someone yelled, “Hotdog,” I’d ask them if they wanted a soda too, and they always did. I had a friend with whom I worked, and he was lazy. Every time I saw him. He was leaning against the rail and eating the food that he was trying to sell. After the games, we’d walk home together. He liked complaining about not making very much money. Once, while he was whining. I told him he should sell hotdogs instead of eating them. He looked at me. With a blank face and said, “Are you calling me fat?” That night, I sat on my porch step before going inside the house. I was thirteen years old, and I had sixty dollars. In the palm of my hand.My legs burned, and I had blisters on my toes, but I didn’t care. As I put my money in my wallet.

**Fragments, Comma Splices, and Sentence Fuses**

**My Study**

My favorite room in the house is my study. Because it is where I sit at my desk to write. Over the past several months. I have worked to create an environment that encourages those passions. For example, one wall is lined with bookshelves that stretch from the floor to the ceiling, needless to say, they are stocked with books. I have poetry books, I have fiction books I also have reference books, such as the dictionary, the thesaurus, and books about rocks, bugs, and stars. Some of the shelves are not full I left them empty to display my wife’s ceramic pots. Some of them are made with coils, some are thrown, and others are sculpted, thus, the pots, the shelves, and the books create an environment that encourages literature and art. Which is just one reason I love my study. On another wall of my office, I have a twenty gallon fish tank. I love tropical fish, such as tiger barbs, catfish, mollies, and red-tailed sharks I like fish tanks because they are very soothing. In addition to the shelves, the books, the pots, and the aquarium, I have several photographs in my office. My favorite photograph is black and white, it is a snapshot of my grandfather. In this photograph. He is playing his trumpet at the Rainbow Ballroom. Behind him, the other musicians dressed in their best black suits with sweat dripping down their faces. At their fingertips are the congas, the tumbas, the quintos, the bass, the trombones, and the saxophones, and their eyes are alive, there is salsa in the air, and the people are dancing. This is how I like to think of my office, it is not a study, it is a night club where the happy ones are singing, laughing, and drinking. Because they know that the music will not stop.

**(Fragments, Comma Splices, and Sentence Fuses Continued)**

**UC Irvine**

When I was attending the University of California at Irvine, my roommates and I were college poor. Sometimes, we lived off of the kindness of our neighbors, next door, lived four girls who knew how to cook. Because they felt sorry for us. They brought us beans, Spanish rice, and enchiladas that we devoured in minutes. After they became sick of our begging, we were on our own. At the grocery store, my roommates and I bought fruits and vegetables that were discounted because they were old, we also bought cheap cans of jalapenos that were dented. We didn’t drive trucks that were so low they scraped against speed bumps as the mufflers purred and the rims spun, we had cinder blocks, milk crates, and 2 x 4s that we used to build book shelves in the evening, as our stomachs settled in for the night, we’d sit in our apartment and drink beer so old that it had lost its fizz, one by one, each of us would take a book from the shelf, open it, and share what we had learned in class. My two roommates were engineers. Who dreamed of building bridges in Peru and Mexico, and I was a comparative literature major who wanted to become a published poet. We talked about timber, steel, and soil we talked about concrete imagery, alliteration, and the sublime, these were the things that were shaping our future. After we graduated with our degrees tucked in our back pockets. We went off in pursuit of our dreams now, when we get together, we sink into the couch and talk about work, but before long, we are lost in conversations about life in general. They are the same conversations that we had as twenty-one year old students. Who were inspired by ideas that cost less than a can of beer.

**Commas**

**The Citrus Trees**

# Last night because the season’s first frost was going to settle in the valley I went outside and took a close look at my young citrus trees. I have a lemon, an orange and a lime. The trees which I purchased at Home Depot, are only two to three feet high. The foliage was tipped with the soft and delicate shoots of new growth, and I knew that the freeze might kill the young leaves. In my shed I discovered three unused plastic tarps. The tarps which I bought to cover the tile floor while painting the kitchen had eyelets so that the plastic sheets could be secured to the ground. In the garage I dug through my tool box, and found the metal pins that I normally use for the tent. I grabbed the hammer and marched outside. By then the grass was already showing the night’s early frost. I started sneezing and my cheeks, and nose burned. I unrolled the tarps, draped them over the redwood stakes supporting the trees, pulled out the edges of the plastic, and pinned them down. The citrus trees stood under a tent and I hoped that in the morning the leaves would still be bright and green not black, withered, and curled.