



Hacks for Seminary and Beyond

TEMPLATES FOR WRITING SUCCESS

THE BASICS

Every academic writing assignment is a demonstration of the full range of reasoning and evidence organized with substantial analysis on the subject topic. The purpose is to persuade the reader that the conclusions of the writing are valid, useful, and appropriate.

The use of templates gives the writer a map of effective writing to follow. In essence they afford the writer the opportunity to employ a concrete structure that includes a set of necessary elements:

- * Thesis
- * Point of view,
- * Context
- * Body of evidence and reasoning,
- * Persuasive conclusion

BASIC TEMPLATE FOR AN ACADEMIC ESSAY

The Necessities:

- * Point of View – the writer’s perspective and standing in relation to the topic. Examples: investigator, analyst, researcher, questioner, critic, etc. This should be clearly stated without excessive use of personal pronouns or reference to oneself.
- * Context – the setting including the history, creation, application, era, and up to date condition/ existence etc. of the issue or topic. This should be directly stated in non-biased language based on commonly agreed upon condition and reality based in fact.
- * Understanding of Audience – the reader/reactor for whom the paper is written. Typically an essay is directed toward the professor in a class, but in the case of a essay to be published in a journal, etc., the audience could be a specific group of scholars or interested individuals. This understanding may include explaining technical terms, giving clarification of assumptions, and specific diction

BASIC TEMPLATE, CONTINUED

- * Use of Examples and Illustrations – the affirmation of an assertion with logical, reasonable, and appropriate evidence. The use of examples should be readily understandable and easily verifiable from reputable sources.
- * Coherent and logical reasoning – the conscious process of developing an idea or point with analysis and evidence that is presented in an understandable and sound manner that is free of fallacies. The presence of a fallacy of reasoning will weaken the entire paper negate the conclusion.
- * Outline – essential for an essay longer than 3 pages. An outline is the map of the entire essay illustrating the basic points, the analyses, and the conclusion, all in the proper sequence.
- * Problem/question – all academic writing focuses on addressing a central problem or question. The entire essay is an organized study and conclusion addressing that question/problem.

BASIC TEMPLATE

Introduction

The essay should begin with a sentence which presents the condensed and precise context of the problem. The introduction should include a clear expression of the author's stance and point of view regarding the problem. Finally there should be a clear and unequivocal statement of the attitude, opinion, or judgement regarding the problem.

Some general rules for writing an introduction are:

- i. Contextualize background
- ii. Introduce a problem
- iii. Response to problem

BASIC TEMPLATE

Body Structures

Possible forms of the Body: separated into parts and paragraphs, where each part is a main point in the problem and each paragraph is one idea or one aspect of an idea.

The Dialectical Plan

- i. Thesis
 1. defense of a certain point of view on the question
 2. often the predominant point of view (the most common analysis)
- ii. Antithesis
 1. Opposing arguments to the preceding argument which lead to a clear contradiction
 2. Perhaps a less common but still valid point of view on the problem
- iii. Synthesis: Establish some nuanced truth in between the two arguments or overcome the initial contradiction by bringing in additional information.

BASIC TEMPLATE

“Problem-Cause-Solution” Plan: This plan is self-explanatory. Introduce and define a problem, pinpoint its causes, and propose a solution.

The Inventory Plan: For a rare case when a paper does not present a solution to a problem.

- i. Separate your argument into parts (in this case, two: pros and cons)
- ii. Order your arguments within each part

The Comparative Plan, in which reflection is born of the comparison of different facts or concepts. There are two rules for this type of paper: (1) Each element of comparison constitutes a section or “part” of the paper (2) the opposition posed at the beginning of the paper should follow until the end of the piece.

- i. First part : first element of comparison (one point of view on an issue, for example)
- ii. Second part : second element of comparison (an opposing point of view)
- iii. Third part : Meditation on the facts presented in the first two parts

BASIC TEMPLATE

Explication-Illustration or Formula/Commentary Plan

- i. Explanation of the formula (definition, for example: “Explain the use of the word it in Webster’s Dictionary and comment on its significance.”)
- ii. Commentary on the formula
 1. Expansion : use a wider scope to analyze the results of this definition
 2. Proposed conclusion on the formula (does it work, is it problematic, how can it be changed?)

BASIC TEMPLATE

The Conclusion

A conclusion must be written in the spirit of synthesis and with logical rigor. Coming to the end of an argument, a conclusion must be concise and strong. If desired, it can situate the results or thesis a more general sense. Many good conclusions suggest further research or pose a further question derived from the paper's conclusion or main idea. This gives legitimacy to the paper in suggesting that it is a part of a larger body of work.

Works Cited

Desalamand, Paul & Tort, Patrick. *Du plan à la dissertation*. 1957.

Harvey, Gordon. "Elements of the Academic Essay." © Harvard University

Booth, Colomb, and Williams. *The Craft of Research*.

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/ I Say*.

<http://research.pomona.edu/writingcenter/resources/student-resources/general-writing-resources/templates-for-writing-a-successful-paper/>

ESSAY TEMPLATES

The following are essay templates for a wide variety of essay types:

- * Analytical Essay Outline
- * Argumentative Essay Outline
- * Compare and Contrast Essay Outline
- * Expository Essay Outline
- * Persuasive Essay Outline
- * Research Paper Outline

LOGICAL FALLACIES

- * What is it? An error in reasoning
- * Learn how to identify them and avoid them in your own writing.
- * There are many different types. This handout presents them in detail:



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