

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Common Mistakes with Essays

1. The Introduction (Hook, Gen. Disc., Thesis):

- a. **Hook:** Use something that addresses/connects to the topic, gets the issue/topic out on the table, generally relates to all people, and grabs the readers attention. **USE 3RD**

→ **PERSON ONLY!! The best hooks combine several of the 5 ways!**

- i. Examples: Are there more kids dropping out of school these days? The drop out rate is on the rise. Who is going to be the 1 out of 10 that will be the next drop out?

- b. **General Discussion:** Don't state what you are going to say in your thesis here; rather kind of just speculate on the issue, the sides of the issue, or the topic itself. Make sure you are still relating to everyone and not just you. **This needs to be two or more sentences long and USE 3RD PERSON ONLY!! This must connect to the Hook!**

- i. There are numerous reasons why kids drop out of school and many different ideas. Some people blame the schools, some the parents, and some the teachers.

1. **No I, Me, My, Mine, You, Your, We, Us in the Hook and General Discussion.**

- c. **Thesis:** Just use this formula and get to the point. Never say, "My essay will," or "I will discuss." This should logically connect to the General Discussion. Here is where you may turn the paper to 1st person, but only if the topic is about you only, your personal life. If the topic is an issue that relates to more people or a group of people, use 3rd person.

- i. **Thesis Formula:** State the topic, because of _____, _____, and _____.

- ii. Example: Most frequently kids drop out of school because of family issues, teen pregnancy, and drugs.

2. **Topic Sentences:** These have **4 parts**: they begin with a transition (see "Transition Usage & Variations for Essays" pg. 38), must state a point in the order it appears in the thesis in **NEW WORDS**, must address the focus/topic of the essay in **NEW WORDS**, and have either the number of things or the specific ideas to discuss in the body paragraph.

- a. Example: To begin with, kids quit school because of *issues at home*. (*you say quit school & issues at home so both your point and main topic are new words*)

- b. Rule: If your TS is general (doesn't state the exact points of the paragraph), then your CS is specific (states the exact points in the paragraph).

3. **Point Sentences:** must break down the TS and connect to the point of the paragraph—just like in the paragraph structure. **3 parts**: Transition, point, main topic (in **new words**)

4. **Example Sentences:** (are the key to your focus) These have **3 parts and MUST** 1) explain/support the point you made in the Pt. Sentence, 2) must specifically show a detail/situation that actually occurred, and 3) explain why that proves your point

- a. Remember, examples must show not tell, use specific/concrete details or facts, answer the questions "how?" or "why?" never assuming the reader knows what you mean, and **should be more than 2 sentences to ensure clarity.**

5. **Transitions**—you need to use them, understand what they mean, and know where and how to use them: See "Transition Usage & Variation for Essays" (p. 38) and follow it.

6. **Compound/Complex Sentences** (see "Complex & Compound Sentences" chart on pg. 58):

- a. **Complex:** when your sentence begins with words like when, before, if, because, although, since, whenever, though, while, etc., a comma must go before the next subject (main noun) even if it this sentence follows a transition.

No: I, me, my,
mine, myself,
we, us, our,
you, your

- i. To begin with, when kids don't get the support they need at home, they often drop out of school.
 - b. **Compound:** Only when you join two complete sentences with and, but, or, nor, so, yet, for (or a semicolon) do you use a comma before the coordinating conjunction.
 - i. Examples: They get frustrated with the lack of support at home, and they drop out of school.
 - ii. Incorrect: They get frustrated with school, and drop out.
7. **Verb Agreement:** Use the appropriate verbs in your sentences
 - a. Singular: a kid gets frustrated There is one solution
 - b. Plural: kids get frustrated There are many reasons
8. **Proper word usage:**
 - a. **To, too, two** (to—article, too—a lot/many/great quantity, two—number)
 - i. It is almost impossible to be too excited over these two small victories.
 - b. **Their, there, they're** (their—pronoun, there—place/location, they're—they are)
 - i. If they're going to head over there, they better bring their coats.
 - c. **Working with words that end in Y and change to—ies, 's, ness:**
 - i. possibility--possibilities, victory—victories, party—parties, family—families or family's, happy—happiness,
9. **The Concluding Paragraph: (RT)** begins with a transition, restates the thesis in new words, and has the main topic; **Summary** must highlight the main issues brought out in your paper (**drive your point home**); **Clincher** must leave the reader with something to think about.
 - a. **Restate Thesis:** In conclusion, kids are dropping out at an alarming rate due to stress in the family, becoming young parents, and getting into drugs.
 - b. **Summary:** Home life is something that cannot be overlooked in this issue, nor can early teen sexuality. Plus, throw drugs into the mix and there is a negative contribution to the first two; separate or alone these issues predict one consequence—a drop out. (**This must be a minimum of 2 sentences**)
 - c. **Clincher:** This part must once again go out to all people, not yourself, and you must not answer the question/dilemma for the reader.
 - i. Example: So, what is it that people can do as a society to keep kids in school?
10. **Using the Correct Person:** Two choices—either 1st person, or 3rd person and it depends on the topic. If it is about you personally, then you use I, me, my, mine, myself (1st person). If it is an issue in society or applies to more than just you, you use 3rd person (kids, teens, people, he, him, her, she, them, they, etc.). **See page 61 for correct person usage.**
 - a. See example of student writing on the overhead and take notes:

Use different words that have the same meaning
11. **Focus:** You must always keep the main topic of your paper in each of the body paragraphs, in your topic sentences, example sentences, and concluding sentences. In other words, if your topic is “Why kids drop out?” then you must explain/prove/answer “Why kids drop out” in your body paragraphs, and you should always refer back to the topic in your (Pt.), examples, and (CS). If your topic is the “1 thing that is important to you,” then you should have “it’s important to me” in your TS & CS sentences and some connection to the topic in your examples. Just remember to use NEW WORDS!
 - a. See the example of student writing on the overhead and take notes:
12. **Peer-Editing:** explain why and what exactly is good and what needs work. **PQPing:** the last P for Polish must address the areas that need the most attention to improve the writing.

Example Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs for “1 Thing Important” Topic

(Hook) “We easily forgive [others] those faults that do not affect us ourselves.” Why is that? (GDT) Often people can get so angry with another person due to their behavior and/or statements because that frustrating behavior resembles something that they do not like within themselves. Whereas dealing with individuals that people are fond of, together they overlook each others’ imperfections because they value the special relationship they share together. (Thesis) Because of such feelings, my friends are the most important aspect of my life because they give me undying support, share common interests, and keep me forever laughing.

(RT) In conclusion, knowing that I can always count on my friends, that we have very similar traits, and they constantly keep me in stitches make my friends the quintessential element in my daily life. (Summary) Life is filled with ups and downs, failures and victories, surprises and expectations. Living would take on the sense of ordinary if all those experiences were had without someone to share them with. (Clincher) “If you want to win friends, make it a point to remember them. If you remember my name, you pay me a subtle compliment; you indicate that I have made an impression on you. Remember my name and you add to my feeling of importance.”

(Hook) “We succeed only as we identify in life, or in war, or in anything else, a single overriding objective, and make all other considerations bend to that one objective.” Everyone then has some sort of goal which brings value to their life; finding what that one special aspect, however, may take a lifetime. (GDT) For those who figure out this dilemma early, they place significance on experiences like memories, relationships, or other intangible concepts. While others place the greatest worth on physical items such as money, an heirloom, jewelry, or something of the like. (Thesis) For me, playing baseball is the most important element in my life because I am captivated by the teamwork, the competition, and my skill in the sport.

(RT) All in all, the game of baseball is the central driving force in my life because of cooperation between players, the rivalry in the sport, and the talent I continue to cultivate. (Summary) Without a doubt everyone has something that helps them either get through the day or motivates them to go on. Life is a temporary state with a very uncertain end, so why not enjoy it while we can with the excitement of something like baseball. (Clincher) “No game in the world is as tidy and dramatically neat as baseball, with cause and effect, crime and punishment, motive and result, so cleanly defined.” What else in life is so neatly packaged and so simplistic that people connect to so deeply?

My Family Essay 2nd Body Paragraph Reworked

(TS) In addition, family provides physical and emotional protection. (1st pt.) One, the mere presence of family members are important because they make me feel protected. (Ex.) Hugs and kisses make me feel great and very much protected. The reassuring affection helps me over come my fear. (2nd pt.) Two, words of encouragement given by family members also help. (Ex.) It makes me feel very special. Also it helps me develop a positive attitude in life. (CS) Therefore, family members help me by providing me protection and words of encouragement to help me succeed in the future.

Rewritten/revised/corrected/improved paragraph below

(TS) Besides being devoted to me, family is imperative because they provide me with physical and emotional protection. (1st pt.) To start with, the mere presence of family members is necessary because they make me feel safe. (Ex.) When I am around my family, I do not feel scared. For example, at school one time this person was saying mean things to me for no reason and called me nasty names. However, as my older brother walked by and overheard this person, he immediately stepped in, stood up to the bully, and made that person apologize to me. Knowing my older brother is around and looks after me makes me feel much more secure. (2nd pt.) Furthermore, the words of encouragement I receive from my family improves my life because they make me feel good about myself. (Ex.) Whenever I play a sport, my family is there to cheer me on whether I do well or not. During one basketball game, I saw my family in the stands shouting out support for my play every time I made a basket. Plus, when I missed, they shouted out, “Hang in there; you’ll make the next one!” These types of comments make me feel like it does not matter what anyone else thinks or says and gives me a sense of confidence about my abilities. (CS) Therefore, the contributions my family members give to me make them a vital part of my life.

Your job is to look over what corrections I made to the 2nd body paragraph of “1 Thing Important” essay, then take the first body paragraph and make the appropriate corrections to it and turn in a completely rewritten first body paragraph found on the Peer-Editing/PQPing example in your “Parts of the Essay” handout on page 5. Use the correct parts, transitions, and specific examples.