

ALL-PURPOSE RULES FOR WRITING ANALYTICAL ESSAYS

I. STRUCTURE

1. Make sure your introduction builds from the general to the specific. Put your specific topic within its larger context. Make your thesis statement succinct.
2. Make sure the body of your essay is logically organized. Order your supporting paragraphs so that your argument builds. Your job is to convince your reader (a reasonable, amiable, and intelligent person) that your thesis/argument is reasonable based on the available evidence. Your argument should flow logically from sentence to sentence, from paragraph to paragraph.
3. A paragraph should have only one idea, expressed in a topic sentence.
4. You should have a paragraph (or two) that summarizes your argument. This is a logical place to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your sources. Don't introduce any new topics here.

II. STYLE

5. Write in a lively and interesting manner. Avoid slang, jargon and informal phrasing. Vary your sentence structure and word choice.
6. Make sure your meaning is clear. Avoid convoluted sentences.
7. Do not have objects doing things only people can. (e.g. "society felt")
8. Use short quotations to support your thesis, but only if they are more persuasive than your own words. In general you should paraphrase rather than quote.
9. On those rare occasions when a quotation is longer than 4 lines, indent and single-space the whole quotation (without quotation marks.)
10. Include only material that furthers your argument and relates to the thesis.
11. Analyze your evidence; don't just report it or list it. Your evidence is to support and substantiate YOUR ideas.
12. A good argument will respectfully consider opposing points of view. If someone whose intelligence you respect disagrees with you, how would you answer him/her?

III. MECHANICS

13. Use strong active verbs. Avoid "seems" and "might." Avoid the passive voice.
14. Don't change verb tenses unnecessarily. If something happened in the past use the past tense.
15. No sentence fragments (like this one.)
16. Use correct punctuation. If in doubt about commas, semi-colons, dashes, etc., check your style guide. If you don't possess such a thing, you might consider getting one.
17. Make sure your subjects and verbs, as well as your nouns and pronouns, agree.
18. Always put someone else's words inside quotation marks, even just a few words. Not to do so is a form of plagiarism.
19. Always analyze quotations. Don't expect them to carry your argument. Explain why those words are important. Analyze the quotation in the same paragraph in which it appears.
20. Include a title that at least describes your topic. Ideally it should also suggest your thesis. "Paper #3" is not a title.
21. It isn't necessary to say "I think" or "I conclude." We're assuming the ideas in the paper are yours.
22. In formal writing do not use the word "quote" (a verb) when what you mean is "quotation" (a noun).

STRUCTURE of an ANALYTICAL ESSAY

INTRODUCTION

General Statement
(Create context for reader.)

More Specific Statements
(Tell us why we should be interested in this subject.)

THESIS

Concise statement of your MAIN IDEA

BODY of PAPER

1. MAIN POINT: Topic Sentence

Supporting Evidence

Transition

2. MAIN POINT: Topic Sentence

Supporting Evidence

Transition

3. MAIN POINT: Topic Sentence

Supporting Evidence

Transition

4. MAIN POINT: Topic Sentence

Supporting Evidence

Transition

CONCLUSION

Restate Thesis
(Use different words.)

Discuss importance of topic
Implications within wider context