Writing Strong Expository Papers for College

English 102

“Write. Rewrite. When not writing or rewriting, read. I know of no shortcuts.”

—Larry L. King, WD, Playwright

Andrew Rusnak
Student Essay Checklist

I will not grade your essay and you will lose one letter grade if the following conditions are not met when you first turn your essay in:

My essay:

- Is the right word count _____.

- **Uses six legitimate outside references.** Direct quotations or paraphrasing must be 20 percent or less of your overall content. Do not string quotes together. **Two of these sources must be graphs, charts, diagrams that support your position.** Legitimate sources are academic research. (You may use magazines, journals, books, LEGITIMATE websites. You may not use, dictionaries, Wikipedia, or other such references) _____.

- Uses at least two direct quotations from the primary source (this does not include the 5 outside sources) _____.

- **Uses APA format,** with parenthetical references in the body of the narrative and a properly formatted References page _____.

- Is on time _____.

- Has a thesis statement that is underlined _____.

- Has the checklist attached _____.


Student Essay Checklist

The following items are considered to be part of the learning process. I may still ask you to revise and work on some of these:

- Has an original and creative title _____.
- Has a well-developed/thought out, concise, strong thesis statement that declares a purpose and/or position, and functions to point the reader in the direction I intend to go. I understand that the thesis is the one stand alone statement in the text that can be extracted and offered as a guide for the reader. Elements in the thesis are used as an outline and to structure the essay. The thesis statement should be preceded by a good introduction and followed by a transition to the next paragraph, to the body of the essay _____.
- Has a well-developed body, overall organization/structure and content. The body of my essay works hard to elaborate and expand on those salient elements outlined in the thesis. There is a mathematical arrangement where the main points in my thesis are the main focus or topic of each subsequent paragraph. There are no redundancies and each idea is well-thought out and developed beyond cliché and common thought so that it is personal, original, and imaginative. My essay maintains a well-mapped structure with strong logic, coherent paragraphs, and overall cohesive unity_____.
- Uses effective sentence variation, clarity, and relevant word choice. My sentences vary in length and arrangement to create smooth narrative flow. My word choice accurately reflects definitive knowledge of subject matter, reactions, and reflections _____.
- Is free of grammatical (mechanics and usage) errors _____. (If you are struggling with grammar and/or mechanics issues, I will ask you to complete exercises from the website to be turned in with your revision or the next paper.)
- Has been given to someone to proofread for me _____.
- Avoids redundancy and cliché _____.
- Is stapled in the upper left corner and does not use plastic covers or unnecessary folders _____.

Student: __________________________________________ Signature: ______________________________ Date: ________ Essay#:_____

This checklist is your guide to all of your essays this semester. You must turn in one completed form with each essay.
Buy a grammar text!

Those of you in English 101 who are reading Stanley Fish’s *How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One* must also purchase a grammar text. When I grade your papers, I will refer to certain concepts of grammar, punctuation, mechanics, organization that are listed on the completed Essay Response form that you will attach to each assignment you turn in. It is your responsibility to study these in the grammar text. You will have an opportunity to correct the mistakes on your returned essay for a better grade. Also, you will need to demonstrate improvement on the next essay.

Examples include:

- The Little Seagull Handbook;
- McGraw Hill Handbook of English Grammar and Usage;
- The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need: A One-Stop Source for Every Writing Assignment;
- Merriam-Webster's Guide to Punctuation and Style;
- The Bedford Handbook; or
- Prentice Hall Handbook for Writers.

*I don’t care which one you purchase, you can get them cheap in any bookstore or at Amazon. Check CCBC book store as well. You must have one. It does not have to be the current edition. Just find something.*
Turn your papers in on time. If you have a family emergency, let me know about it.
Title your essay in a way that cleverly, creatively, reflects your thesis position. DO NOT use the title of the text or film that you are writing about as the title for your own essay! Be creative! Also, use title case. “Your Title Here,” not “Your title here.”
2,000 words means 2,000 words. It does not mean 1,900 words. If you want to write longer and can do so without being redundant, have at it. If your essay falls short by 25 words or so, that’s fine. Write to a natural length, but hit the 2,000 word mark.
All first graphs of expository papers must include:

1) Introduction;
2) Thesis;
3) Transition.

This does not mean that you need three corresponding sentences to meet the three obligations above. You can, depending on the assignment, meet this criteria in one sentence.
The kinds of essays, responses, or research you will be writing require you to explain something to an audience. This explanation may take the form of an analysis, an argument/persuasion, or a description stemming from a series of observations. Analyzing, arguing (taking a position), describing, comparing, contrasting, whatever the specifics of the assignment, this kind of writing requires a strong thesis or position statement.

You must underline your thesis statements in your essays.
On Thesis Statements....

- Explains in detail to the reader the importance of the subject the writer decides to write about;
- Makes a claim, takes a position;
- Takes the general subject matter explained in the title, and narrows it down into a specific, detailed statement;
On Thesis Statements....

- Functions as a compressed summary of the essay;
- Guides the reader by outlining the paper;
- Unifies the writer’s and reader’s thoughts; and
- Is usually one sentence (no more than two) in the introduction of the essay.
“Mirror Neurons: Are we Ethical by Nature?”

By Christian Keysers. If we have mirror neurons, and the neuroscience certainly seems to confirm that, if our mirror neurons automatically fire when we witness (hear, see, touch, even “taste”) the actions of others, even if there are “neutral gates” that can function to inhibit our actual execution of imitation, where is free will? Read the information on the “Milgram experiment on obedience to authority figures” and information on the “by-stander effect.” Do these areas of research in any way contradict the mirror neuron research? How and Why? In other words, are our brains ethical by design? Are they intuitively altruistic?
STEP 1: Brainstorm

Make a list. Don’t worry about organizing it, that comes later. Write down things that Keysers reported in her essay. For instance, Keysers writes, “The emotions of others are contagious because our brain activates our own emotions at the sight of them.”
The claim here is that our brains, via evolution, are programmed to actually respond to what we see others are responding to, that this is an automatic, involuntary response that, when it comes to the initial manifestation of the reaction, triggering the neuro-response, we have no control.
What can we conclude from this? That we “are ethical by nature” because our brain fires in the same way as someone we only witness is experiencing an emotion that we are not?

http://video.pbs.org/video/1615173073
This conclusion seems to leave out many variables. For instance, just because we see someone in pain, and just because our brain reacts to this by initiating neural activity that simulates the same kind of pain, being ethical would require us to act in some way to relieve that other person’s pain.
Some people can have this feeling/sensation of empathy but, instead of acting sympathetically, they can actually be agents of pain. Those who are guilty of physical abuse, for instance, can feel empathy, but act unethically.
Milgram started his experiments in 1961, shortly after the trial of the World War II criminal Adolph Eichmann had begun. Eichmann’s defense that he was simply following instructions when he ordered the deaths of millions of Jews roused Milgram’s interest. In his 1974 book *Obedience to Authority*, Milgram posed the question, “Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oygZ0QyiRT0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oygZ0QyiRT0) Eichmann Trial, 9 Min

**Psychology**
The participants in the Milgram experiment were 40 men recruited using newspaper ads. In exchange for their participation, each person was paid $4.50. Milgram developed an intimidating shock generator, with shock levels starting at 30 volts and increasing in 15-volt increments all the way up to 450 volts. The many switches were labeled with terms including “slight shock,” “moderate shock” and “danger: severe shock.” The final two switches were labeled simply with an ominous “XXX.”
Each participant took the role of a “teacher” who would then deliver a shock to the “student” every time an incorrect answer was produced. While the participant believed that he was delivering real shocks to the student, the student was actually a confederate in the experiment who was simply pretending to be shocked. As the experiment progressed, the participant would hear the learner plead to be released or even complain about a heart condition. Once the 300-volt level had been reached, the learner banged on the wall and demanded to be released. Beyond this point, the learner became completely silent and refused to answer any more questions. The experimenter then instructed the participant to treat this silence as an incorrect response and deliver a further shock.
The level of shock that the participant was willing to deliver was used as the measure of obedience. How far do you think that most participants were willing to go? When Milgram posed this question to a group of Yale University students, it was predicted that no more than 3 out of 100 participants would deliver the maximum shock. In reality, 65% of the participants in Milgram’s study delivered the maximum shocks. Of the 40 participants in the study, 26 delivered the maximum shocks while 14 stopped before reaching the highest levels. It is important to note that many of the subjects became extremely agitated, distraught and angry at the experimenter. Yet they continued to follow orders all the way to the end.

The results of the Milgram experiment would suggest that we are unethical by nature. So, when you combine the results of Keyser’s research and the Milgram experiment and you are trying to come up with a thesis, when you are trying to come up with a position, there’s an apparent conflict.

Johannesburg Experiment: 2:11
http://vimeo.com/17109940
Based on the research conducted by Christian Keysers presented in his essay “Mirror Neurons” and his proposition that we are ethical by nature, conflicting evidence such as the Milgram experiment suggests that we can indeed be unethical by nature. When these two sources are examined, it appears that ethical and unethical human acts are conscious and voluntary learned behaviors, that we are not programmed to respond involuntarily either ethically or unethically, but that we make choices on how to respond. This means that we are neither ethical or unethical “by nature.”
Despite the evidence in the behavioral Milgram experiment, the research presented by Christian Keysers’ in his essay “Mirror Neurons” clearly indicates that we are ethical by nature because we have an automatic response when we witness the pain of others. Whether we act on any idea or impulse to relieve the pain of others is irrelevant when it comes to defining our inner nature. The response is involuntary and telling. The only act we might undertake is to try and block its effects.
If we are “ethical by nature” as Christian Keysers proposes in his essay “Mirror Neurons,” than it makes no sense that unethical acts exist at all. It makes more sense due to the proliferation of unethical acts throughout history, that, as the Milgram experiment demonstrated, we are unethical by nature.
Remember:

It’s not about being right or wrong, it’s about finding the right questions to ask so that you can adopt a position you can defend.
The thesis should be located in the first paragraph. The first paragraph of expository writing should contain three elements:

- **Introduction**;
- **Thesis**; and
- **Transition**.

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We believe the constructions in this paper would be more generally applicable, so long as the semantics can be represented as sets and sensible notions of composition can be defined in some pointwise manner on their elements (in this paper it is sets of lists and list concatenation; see Definition 2.7).

**Technical overview.** The meat of this paper is some concrete calculations on nominal sets. The key technical facts are Theorems 3.14 and 3.16 and Proposition 4.6. The key definitions are Definitions 3.7, 4.5, and 5.7. The main theorem is Theorem 6.4.

Nominal sets were developed to represent syntax with binding; see [15] or a recent survey [19]. In this paper we use nominal sets to interpret sets of traces with atoms. The notions of names and free/bound names we use are exactly those from [15]; namely atoms and supporting set/freshness.

To the reader familiar with nominal sets, name-restriction \( \forall a. X \) will be no surprise; Proposition 4.6 characterises it as a variation of atoms-abstraction \( [\alpha] x \) from [15] (see [13, Definition 3.8 and Lemma 3.13]). Readers familiar with presheaves will recognise this as a sets-based presentation of \( \delta \) from e.g. [8] or [21]; see [16,7] for further discussion.

The difference, which is significant, is that \( X \) and \( \forall a. X \) are of the same type (both are sets of traces); our name-restriction is not a monad in the sense of [22], though it does a similar job. More on this in the Conclusions.

Given that behaviour is modelled as ‘just sets’ and not wrapped up in an explicit abstraction, the challenge is that in composition \( X \circ Y \), bound atoms in \( Y \) should somehow be detected and renamed to avoid capture with free atoms in \( X \) (see Remark 5.8), and vice-versa.

We use maximal positive planes as a foundational data structure for a notion of capture-avoiding language composition. Planes (Definition 3.3) are from [12] and were used to model capture-avoiding substitution. Positive planes are new (Definition 3.7), as is the connection with \( \nu \) (Proposition 4.6). Arguably, planes and positive planes are as interesting as their application in this paper and we expect them to be useful in the future.

We conclude with an axiomatisation in the style of Kleene algebras and a proof of soundness (Section 6).
What constitutes a strong narrative?
Well-developed body, overall organization/structure and content:

• The body of your essay works hard to elaborate and expand on those salient elements outlined in the thesis. There is a mathematical arrangement where the main points in your thesis are the main focus or topic of each subsequent paragraph. Remember your thesis and the narrative of your essay are always connected;

• There are no redundancies and each idea is well-thought out and developed beyond cliché and common thought so that it is personal, original, and imaginative. Do not repeat yourself. Do not use such phrases as, “Mirror neurons mean we are ethical and virtuous,” two words that mean the same thing;

• Your essay must maintain a well-mapped structure with strong logic, coherent paragraphs, and overall cohesive unity.
Well-developed body, overall organization/structure and content:

- **There must be effective sentence variation, clarity, and relevant word choice. Do not start each sentence with the same syntactical arrangement. Do not start each sentence in a sequence, for instance, beginning with “The” this or “The” that. Mix up how your sentences are arranged. Study sentence variation:**

OUT ON THE BIG DRY we had to kill to live:

Come October, we’d herd a yearling lamb into the west pen, throw it some good flakes of alfalfa hay. It’d be grass-fat by then, nearly tame, just chewing, and looking around, and chewing. My father, his black hair bright and wild in the early winter light, would put the rifle barrel in its soft ear and pull the trigger. We were nearly two hours away from the nearest supermarket. And even if we were closer, we couldn’t afford it. We ate lamb all winter—lamb chops and leg of lamb and lamb stew with garden peas my mother canned. All kinds of lamb.

But on Sunday, we almost always pulled a fryer out of the freezer for dinner. Butchering chickens was an all-day affair, a late-summer festival of sorts, a kind of prairie celebration. We put on our old jeans and stained snap shirts and ate a big breakfast of hamburger steak, eggs, and potatoes. My mother and grandmother set up aluminum basins of hot water for the plucking. My father and grandfather sharpened knives and hatchets. And when everything was finally ready, they sent us children into the coop.

— From Joe Wilkins, *Out West*
Your sentences must vary in length and arrangement to create smooth narrative flow. Your word choice must accurately reflect definitive knowledge (what you know) of the subject matter, reactions, and reflections. Maintain an awareness of the following:

Active verbs – Keep your sentences active as opposed to passive. For instance:
   “The professor teaches the students” is a better sentence than “The students are taught by the professor.”

Emphasis – What’s supposed to be emphasized, should be.

Variety – (See above)

Parallelism/Parallel Structure – Keep your sentences and clauses parallel. For instance “She likes running, writing, and to bake” is not acceptable. “She likes to run, write, and bake” is. “She likes running, writing, baking” is correct but not active.

Mixed constructions – Your sentences have to make logical sense. For instance,
   “The fact that the marathon is twenty-six miles, a length that explains why I never have finished it” does not make sense.

Shifts – “She caught the ball and then throws it to the catcher for the out” caught is past tense and “throws” is present. These should be consistent. “She caught the ball and threw it to the catcher for the out.”

Dangling modifiers – “Having finished the test, Bob opened a beer.” Bob opened the beer is clear, but who finished the test is not. “Bob finished the test and then opened a beer.”
• Your sentences must vary in length and arrangement to create smooth narrative flow. Your word choice must accurately reflect definitive knowledge (what you know) of the subject matter, reactions, and reflections. Maintain an awareness of the following (cont.):

Fragments –
Subject/Verb Agreement –
Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement –
Run on Sentences –
Comma Usage –
Apostrophes –
Proper Quotation Marks and End Punctuation –
On Grammar ...

When I grade your papers and list what corrections need to be made, I may say, “go to the website to complete the exercises on:

• Apostrophes;
• Run on Sentences;
• Commas;
• Subject/Verb Agreement; or
• Sentence Fragments”;

You will need to make a copy of the exercise sheet, complete it and turn it in with either your revision or your next paper to receive a grade.
With each essay assignment you must turn in a completed essay response form. These are found in your syllabus packet.
On Sources ….

- Six legitimate outside references. Two of these must be charts, illustrations, graphs, or tables to promote your thesis. Direct quotations or paraphrasing must be 20 percent or less of your overall content. Do not string quotes together. Your sources must come from:
  - Researched and legitimate information;
  - Peer-reviewed journals;
  - Magazines with legitimately investigated content;
  - Websites if they are legitimate and the authors of the information are “credentialed,” subject-matter-experts.

- 2-3 direct quotes from the text or film.

Do not use dictionaries or Wikipedia as a source!
On Sources .... Graph Example. You can recreate charts, tables, graphs, illustrations (you need two), just be sure to accredit the source. Or, you can simply cut and paste. The example graph below was created in Excel.

**Student Survey: Your Relationship With Others (Pre-unit results)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends &amp; Family</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity 2 or less</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion 2 or less</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orien.</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You must use APA format

Which means that your citations within the narrative of the text must be set up correctly (the parenthetical references) and your “References” page must be formatted correctly. If you are a humanities major, familiarize yourself with MLA format, but for this class, use APA format. If you are going to major in social or natural sciences use APA format.

You can access online the correct formatting guidelines for either style. You do not need to purchase a separate text. You also can ask the CCBC librarian for a 2-page summary sheet of either the MLA or APA style guidelines. These are free for the asking.

Make sure you follow the guidelines. This includes correct spacing, indenting, italicizing, capitalizing, etc ... Do not forget page headers and abstracts (APA).

It is your responsibility to learn the format! Take the time to do so.
Examples of MLA format in narrative of text.

Mobius Thunderduck
Professor Quack
English 1302
April 1, 2007

Global Warming May Be Hazardous to Your Health

Can you imagine a planet where tropical diseases like malaria, cholera, typhoid, and dengue run rampant? Can you imagine asthma and respiratory diseases occurring in the majority of the population? Can you envision a world where heat strokes would become a common reason for death? All of this may very well happen here — on our planet — Earth!

Global warming was first detected back in 1896 by a Swedish chemist named Svante Arrhenius (Cooper 1). Just as Arrhenius predicted, during the last 50 years, emissions from industry have been the major influence on our changing world climate. The primary culprit is carbon dioxide that acts as a greenhouse gas, trapping solar radiation and heating up the earth (Calvin). “Since the late 1800’s, the global average temperature has increased about 0.7 to 1.4°F” (Mastrandrea and Schneider 232). Experts see the possibility that world temperatures may continue to increase another 0.5°F every ten years, causing drastic effects to our earth (“Greenhouse” 35). Since 1998, our earth has experienced the five hottest years in recorded time, with the hottest year being 2005 (Choo).

Just one of the effects of increasing temperatures may be the onset of new and unforeseen health hazards. Dr. Carlos Corvalan of the World Health Organization (WHO) says, “The evidence is accumulating, and ecological and human health impacts are expected. We are also concerned that the health impacts of global warming will strike hardest at developing nations, particularly the poorest” (qtd. in Agnew). Vasseur concurs saying, “...deaths, starvation, and infectious diseases have been predicted, especially in developing countries” (593). She warns that cholera, typhoid, and malaria could engulf areas that lack adequate hygiene, and that these diseases could continue to spread northward and southward beyond the tropics (593).

Disease outbreaks may be triggered as a result of extreme weather events, like droughts or heavy rainfall (“Early”1). In the U.S., a prolonged drought in the ‘90s disrupted the ecosystem,
Sample MLA Works Cited Page

Works Cited is a list of citations at the end of a research paper. A Works Cited page starts on a new page and is numbered as a continuation of the paper. Items in a Works Cited list are alphabetized by author. When no author is given, alphabetize by title, ignoring “A”, “An” and “The” if one of these is the first word. Use a five space (½”) indentation for all lines after the first line of a citation entry. Double-space the entire list.

Works Cited


Examples of APA format. You do not have to prepare an abstract, just know that it may be required in the future when you take upper level courses. Be sure the in-text citations are made according to APA style.

**Prevailing Wages**

**Introduction**

The U.S. Congress passed the Davis-Bacon Act in 1931 during the Great Depression. According to this act, a law was implemented that required governmental contractors to pay ‘prevailing wages’ on projects that it took on behalf of the federal government. The effect of this legislation was that more than 40 states adopted the ‘little Davis-Bacon Acts’ or ‘prevailing wage’ laws. This was then, but later on, many states repealed these statutes. Still, many states today, including Michigan, carry on with such laws that seem to have become obsolete from those Depression-days (Vedder 1997). This paper shall attempt to take a closer look as to what the implications of implementing such laws are, with scrutiny of these laws as enacted in the state of Michigan. Various statistics shall be presented to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of using such laws in a state. The paper shall discuss the various issues that Michigan has faced in regards to these laws and will come up with some solutions and recommendations for the state of Michigan on whether it should continue to implement these rules or repeal from them.

Many jurisdictions, including that of the federal government, set the prevailing wages exactly at or very near to those that are demanded by the laborers according to the union-scale. “Prevailing wage laws, then, force contractors on government construction or other projects to pay their employees at the same rate as unionized members of the relevant occupation—whether it be bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, or other categories of workers—even if non-union contractors could perform the same work less expensively by paying their workers lower but mutually agreed-upon wages” (Vedder 1997). The governments usually use a very complex and intricate method to set these prevailing wages, “but because of the large number of distinct
Examples of APA format.
APA format requires a References page unlike MLA which requires a Works Cited page.
A final word about plagiarism. Do your own work, do not copy and paste something directly into your paper unless you are going to source it. Do not buy a paper online, and do not ever try to pass someone else’s words off as your own.