

How to Write an Opinion Essay

The basic five-paragraph essay structure, which you have probably used many times by this point, works extremely well for an opinion essay. It's a starting point, and when you get to university your profs will expect a more complex approach to essay writing. If you feel confident about your essay-writing skills, you can certainly branch out into longer and more complex essays. But this basic five-paragraph outline is a good starting point, especially if you feel uncertain of your ability.

An opinion essay exists to prove your main point – your **thesis**. This should be clearly stated in your **opening paragraph**. Don't leave the reader to guess what your position is on the issue – make a clear stand!

Next, develop your argument in the body of your essay. Each paragraph should contain a single, clear idea that support your point of view. You can use examples and illustration, cause-and-effect reasoning, comparison/contrast or other methods of development to support your argument.

Research: Any statements you make that would cause a reader to say, "Wait, how do you know that's true?" need to be backed up with documentation from outside sources ("I saw something on TV about it one time" would not be considered adequate documentation). Refer to the handout "What is Research?" for further details.

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- **Paragraph One** -- The **introduction**. Here you state the main idea of your entire essay -- the point you are trying to make or prove. This paragraph should include your **thesis statement** plus **three reasons** why you believe this statement to be true.
- **Paragraphs Two, Three and Four**. These are the **body** of your essay. Remember back in Paragraph One, you gave three reasons for your opinion? Three reasons, three body paragraphs. Each of the body paragraphs should take **one** of your reasons and explain it in more detail, citing sources where necessary.
- **Paragraph Five** -- The **conclusion**. Former Newfoundland premier Joey Smallwood once said about giving speeches: "First I tell them what I'm going to tell them, then I tell them, then I tell them what I told them." That's how you write an essay. In the conclusion, tell them what you told them. Sum up your argument by restating your thesis statement and reminding the reader what your three reasons were. In an argumentative essay, you can finish with a "call to action" -- tell the reader what you would like them to do as a result.

Sample Five-Paragraph Essay

Subject: Should parents have their children vaccinated?

Title

Author's Name

Why You Should Vaccinate Your Kids

sample essay for student use by Trudy Morgan-Cole

Paragraph One:

Introduction

Three reasons for my opinion

Thesis statement

Since Edward Jenner introduced the first successful smallpox vaccine by injecting an eight-year-old boy with cowpox pus in 1796, vaccines have been an important part of public health care around the world ("Edward Jenner"). Yet today, many parents choose not to vaccinate their children. Because vaccines are widely supported by research, have few side effects, and have proven successful in halting the spread of disease, I believe it is important that all parents continue to vaccinate their children.

Paragraph Two:

Develops the first reason by giving examples

Topic Sentence

All major health organizations, including the Centres for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, recommend vaccination. The value of vaccination is supported by research from around the world, and researchers are constantly working to improve the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Epidemiologists, the scientists whose job is to study the outbreak of disease, all recommend vaccination.

Paragraph Three:

Topic Sentence

Develops the second reason, giving facts and statistics to support the statement.

Many parents worry about the safety of vaccines. While side effects do occur, they are usually minor, like redness or swelling around the site of an injection. In Canada, only about one in a million doses of vaccine leads to serious side effects ("Fact and Fiction"). The most famous study linking vaccines to autism, one which got many parents worried about vaccination, has been proven false and the doctor who conducted the study has had his medical license taken away (Triggle).

Paragraph Four:

Topic sentence

Develops third reason, giving an example

Around the world, increased vaccination leads to better public health. Diseases like smallpox and polio which once killed and disabled millions of people are virtually unknown today thanks to immunization programs. Yet in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan where the Taliban discourage immunization, rates of polio are on the rise again (Nordland).

Paragraph Five:

Conclusion

*Restatement of thesis
Summary of reasons*

If and when you have children, please get them vaccinated. The risks are minimal and you'll not only be following the best advice of medical science and protecting your own child from disease; you'll be helping in the fight to eradicate infectious diseases in your community and around the world.

Persuasive Essay Graphic Organizer

Paragraph #1 - Introduction

- Attention-grabbing beginning -
- Description of issue -
- Opinion Statement -

Paragraph #2

Reason #1 -

Evidence to support
(details and examples)

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-

Paragraph #3

Reason #2 -

Evidence to support
(details and examples)

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-
-

Paragraph #4

Reason #3 -

Evidence to support
(details and examples)

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-
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-
-
-

Paragraph #5 - Conclusion

- Restate opinion -
- Summarize 3 reasons -
- Call to action or closing statement -

Opinion Essay Checklist

- Is there an interesting hook?
- Is there a clear, strong thesis statement?
- Are there at least three supporting arguments or reasons supporting the thesis statement?
- Does the essay address at least one counter argument?
- Would this essay help persuade you to agree with the author?
- Is the fourth wall broken?

Starting with a Hook

Examples of Hooks

•Personal example

My life was transformed on my 12th birthday when I pulled back the wrapping on my gift and saw the word “Droid” on the box beneath.

•Quotations

“Bad human communication leaves us less room to grow.”

•Facts or statistics

The world is a dangerous place, but it might be worse without cell phones. In fact, 40 percent of mobile phone owners said they found themselves in an emergency situation and having their cell phone helped.

•Rhetorical questions

Does anyone know of an adult who doesn't have a cell phone?

•Current events

Recently there has been a movement to add cell phone technology to the number of tools used in the classroom.

•Contrast to the thesis statement

Cell phones are, perhaps, the most annoying invention of our generation. However, as annoying as they are, no one who has one wants to give it up.

Hook Guides: [Writing the Hook, 13 Examples](#) [Hooks & Attention Grabbers](#)

Don't Break the fourth wall

Don't tell the reader that you're going to tell them something - just tell them!

Examples of things to avoid:

- In my opinion, I am opposed to the legalization of same sex marriage
- In this essay, I will handle that a couple who has more benefits than a couple who have never lived with each other.
- My statement is that death penalty must exist and it's effective.
- Personally, I strongly believe euthanasia should be legalized. I have three reasons for my argument.
- Then I claim that couple should live together at least 6 months before they get marry.



Guides

- [How to Write an Opinion Essay](#)
- [Writing Opinion Essays](#)
- [Argumentative Essays](#)
- Hooks: [Writing the Hook](#), [13 Examples](#) [Hooks & Attention Grabbers](#)

Videos

- [Opinion Essay or Persuasive Essay](#)
- [IELTS Writing Task - What is your Opinion Essay](#)

Sources of possible topics

[EGL212 Possible Topics](#)

<http://www.procon.org/> (click on Topics A~Z to see a long list)

<http://www.procon.org/debate-topics.php>

<http://www.debate.org/big-issues/>

<http://debatewise.org/>

<http://debategraph.org/home>