

Instructions and Worksheet for Writing a 5-Paragraph Essay

Step 1: Determine a Purpose for your Essay

The following are the most common purposes for essay-writing:

Narrative ~ An essay can narrate a sequence of events (i.e. the events surrounding the fall of man in the Garden of Eden; the events surrounding Daniel being thrown in the lion's den).

Descriptive ~ An essay can describe "something." ("Something" can include people, places, animals, things, ideas, periods of time, events, etc. Specific examples are George Washington, Yellowstone National Park, kangaroos, a camera, peace, Roman Empire, Civil War, etc.)

Comparative/Contrasting ~ An essay can compare and/or contrast two topics (i.e. Christianity vs. Islam).

Explanatory or Interpretive ~ An essay can explain or interpret an issue (i.e. an explanation of what it means to be a follower of Jesus; an interpretation of what Jesus meant when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father except through Me" [John 14:6]).

Persuasive ~ An essay can persuade the reader to take the same side as the writer on a specific issue or persuade the reader to take action on an issue (i.e. lying is never good; help conserve energy).

Step 2: Determine your General then Specific Essay Topic

You need to choose a general topic for your essay, and then work it down to a very specific essay topic (i.e. Jesus → miracles of Jesus → Jesus walked on water → Jesus' faith lesson to Peter when Jesus and Peter walked on water).

(Note: You may prefer to choose your topic and narrow it down BEFORE you determine the purpose for your essay. In that case, complete step 2 before you do step 1.)

Step 3: Write your Introductory Paragraph

The first paragraph of your 5-paragraph essay will be your introductory paragraph. Your introductory paragraph will introduce your topic to the reader (usually in a general way), and will share three main points about your narrowed-down topic (which will be further discussed in paragraphs 2, 3 & 4 of your essay). Your introductory paragraph will conclude with a statement (or opinion, observation, or conclusion that you have drawn) regarding your specific essay topic.

Example of an Introductory Paragraph for an Explanatory/ Interpretive Essay:

Jesus performed many miracles and taught many lessons when He lived and walked on the earth. **General** One of the miracles Jesus did was to walk on water, which we learn about in the Bible. **Point one** Not only did Jesus walk on the water in that miracle, but He also enabled Peter to walk on the water, too. **Point two** Jesus used this miracle to teach Peter to have faith in Him at all times. **Point three** Just as Peter learned from this miracle, I need to remember to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus instead of on my circumstances. **Specific statement/observation**