

WRITING PACK

What Is an Essay: Study Guide

An essay is a piece of writing that develops and supports one main idea about a topic, using a clear, organized structure. Most academic essays, whatever their type (cause-effect, comparison, problem-solution, and so on), share the same basic three-part structure: an introduction, a series of body paragraphs (usually three), and a conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction is the first paragraph of the essay. An introduction paragraph moves from **general to specific**, like a funnel — it starts broad and narrows down step by step until it reaches the exact point of the essay. Each sentence should be a little narrower than the one before it.

The introduction starts with a **hook**. The hook can be about the topic in a broad sense (technology, cities, health, etc.); the **background/connecting information** brings the reader closer to the specific angle the essay will take.

The introduction paragraph ends with the **thesis statement**, a sentence that states the main idea of the essay and often previews how the essay will be organized. The thesis statement is usually the last sentence of the introduction, since everything before it exists to lead the reader toward it. The **thesis statement** clearly states the main argument and the points that will be developed in the body paragraphs.

A common mistake is jumping straight from a broad hook to the thesis without any connecting information in between. This makes the introduction feel abrupt, as if a step is missing.

Types of Hooks

A hook is the opening sentence of an essay, designed to capture the reader's attention before leading into the thesis statement. Different types of hooks work better for different topics.

- **Question hook:** What would happen if every car on the road today were replaced with a self-driving vehicle tomorrow?
- **Statistic / fact hook:** Nearly one in three adults worldwide reports getting less sleep than doctors recommend each night.
- **General statement hook:** Few inventions have changed the way people communicate as dramatically as the smartphone.
- **Quotation hook:** As the writer Mark Twain once observed, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

Thesis Statement Examples

A good thesis statement does two things: it states the topic, and it previews the main points or organization of the essay. Compare the weak and strong versions below.

Weak vs. Strong Thesis Statements

- Weak: Social media is bad for teenagers. (states an opinion, but previews nothing about how the essay is organized)
- Strong: Excessive social media use among teenagers has led to three significant problems: reduced sleep quality, lower academic performance, and increased anxiety. (states the topic and previews exactly three points of development)

Thesis Statements Across Essay Types

- Cause-effect: There are three main reasons why remote work has become so common in recent years; advances in technology, changing employee expectations, and cost savings for companies
- Comparison: Although big cities and small towns differ considerably in the pace of daily life and access to services, both settings can offer residents a strong sense of community.
- Problem-solution: Restaurant food waste is a significant and largely preventable problem that could be substantially reduced if more restaurants partnered with local food donation organizations.

Body Paragraphs

Each body paragraph develops one part of the thesis statement. It begins with a **topic sentence**, which states the main idea of that paragraph and the specific angle the writer will take on it. The rest of the paragraph consists of **supporting sentences**, examples, reasons, facts, or more specific details that develop and prove the topic sentence. A paragraph with a strong topic sentence but weak or missing supporting sentences will feel unconvincing, no matter how good the main idea is.

Conclusion

The conclusion is the final paragraph. It typically **restates the thesis** in different words, reminding the reader of the essay's main idea without simply repeating the introduction word for word. Beyond restating the thesis, a strong conclusion often adds a final thought — a suggestion, a prediction, a question, or an opinion related to the topic — so that the essay ends with a clear impression rather than trailing off.

Conclusion Paragraph – Specific Vocabulary:

In conclusion, / To conclude, / In summary, / Overall, / To sum up, / All in all, / In short, / On the whole, ...

Note: A conclusion should never introduce a brand-new argument or piece of evidence — the final thought should feel like a natural extension of what has already been discussed, not a new topic.

Restatement of Thesis Examples

A restatement repeats the idea of the original thesis using different words and a different sentence structure, rather than copying it directly. Compare each original thesis statement below with its restated version in a conclusion paragraph.

Example 1

- **Original thesis:** There are three main reasons why remote work has become so common in recent years; advances in technology, changing employee expectations, and cost savings for companies.

- **Restatement:** In conclusion, technological progress, shifting employee expectations, and financial savings have jointly driven the rise of remote work.

Example 2

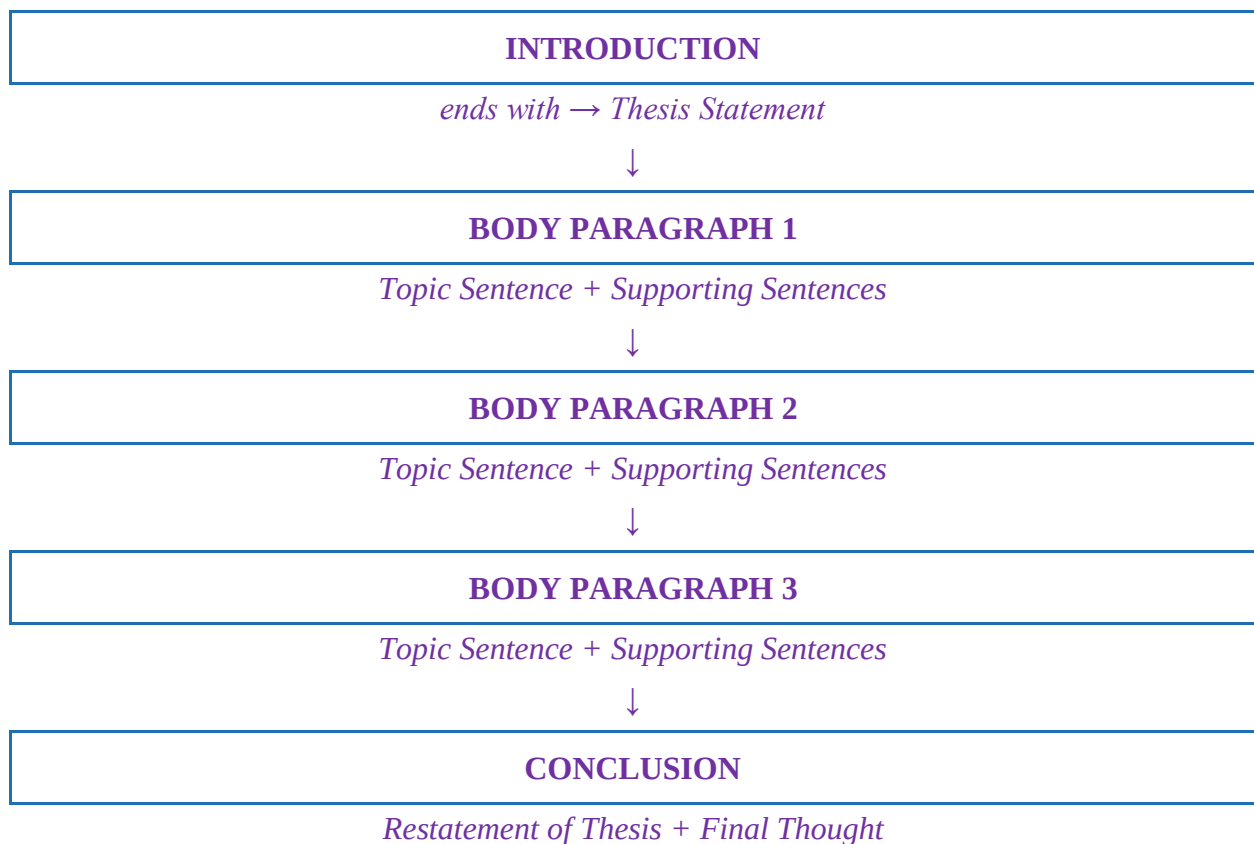
- **Original thesis:** Although big cities and small towns differ considerably in the pace of daily life and access to services, both settings can offer residents a strong sense of community.
- **Restatement:** In conclusion, while big cities and small towns differ sharply in pace and access to services, both can offer residents a genuine sense of belonging.

Example 3

- **Original thesis:** Ocean plastic pollution could be significantly reduced through a combination of three measures: banning single-use plastics, expanding recycling infrastructure, and funding ocean cleanup technology.
- **Restatement:** In conclusion, no single measure is likely to solve ocean plastic pollution on its own, but banning single-use plastics, improving recycling infrastructure, and investing in cleanup technology together form a realistic path toward cleaner oceans.

Notice that each restatement uses different vocabulary and sentence structure from the original thesis, while keeping exactly the same core idea.

Essay Structure at a Glance



Sample Essay: The Benefits of Taking a Holiday

Around the world, people take holidays for many different reasons, whether to relax, explore new places, or spend time with loved ones. Although taking time away from work or daily responsibilities

may sometimes require careful planning, holidays can provide important physical and emotional benefits. *[Thesis Statement]* Taking a holiday offers three major benefits: reducing stress, improving relationships, and increasing productivity.

[Topic Sentence] The first benefit of taking a holiday is reduced stress. *[Supporting Sentences]* Taking a break from work, school, and everyday responsibilities gives people an opportunity to rest and recharge. Spending time away from familiar routines can also help individuals temporarily distance themselves from sources of stress. As a result, holidays can contribute to greater relaxation and overall well-being.

[Topic Sentence] A second benefit is stronger relationships. *[Supporting Sentences]* Holidays often give people more time to spend with family members, friends, or partners without the pressures of their usual schedules. Shared activities and new experiences can create positive memories and provide opportunities for meaningful conversations. Consequently, taking a holiday can help people strengthen their relationships with those around them.

[Topic Sentence] Finally, holidays can increase productivity. *[Supporting Sentences]* Although taking time off may seem to reduce productivity, regular breaks can actually help people return to their responsibilities feeling more refreshed and motivated. Time away from routine tasks can also provide an opportunity to reflect and approach problems from a different perspective. Therefore, a well-planned holiday can help people return to work or study with renewed energy and focus.

[Restatement of Thesis] In conclusion, taking a holiday offers more than a temporary escape from everyday responsibilities: it can reduce stress, strengthen relationships, and help people return to their work or studies with greater energy. *[Final Thought]* For this reason, taking regular breaks should be seen not simply as a luxury, but as an important part of maintaining a healthy and productive lifestyle.

Cause-Effect Essay: Study Guide

A cause-effect essay explains why something happens (causes) and/or what happens because of it (effects). Some cause-effect essays focus only on causes, some focus only on effects, and some cover both. The key skill is showing a clear, logical connection between one event or situation and another — not simply listing facts side by side.

Cause-Effect Essay — Specific Vocabulary

Expressing **cause**:

- Rising housing costs are **a cause of** / **a reason for** the growth of remote work.
- Advances in technology have **led to** / **given rise to** / **brought about** a shift toward remote work.
- **Because** / **Since** / **As** more companies adopted digital tools, remote work became easier to manage.
- **Owing to** / **On account of** / **Because of** / **Due to the fact that** employees value flexibility, many companies have relaxed their office requirements.
- **Owing to** / **On account of** / **Because of** / **Due to** advances in communication technology, remote work has become widespread.

Expressing **effect**:

- Remote work **affects** / **influences** how employees balance their personal and professional lives.

- The shift to remote work **results in / produces / causes** changes in how teams communicate.
- Changes in team communication are **a consequence of / a result of / due to / the effect of** remote work.
- **When / If** companies allow remote work, employees often report higher job satisfaction.
- Companies allow remote work. **As a result, / As a consequence, / Consequently, / Thus, / Therefore, / Hence, / For this reason,** employees often report higher job satisfaction.

Cause-Effect Essay Structure

A cause-effect essay can be organized in two ways:

- Focus-on-causes essay: the thesis introduces a situation and the body paragraphs each explain one cause behind it.
- Focus-on-effects essay: the thesis introduces a situation and the body paragraphs each explain one effect that follows from it.

Example Outline 1 — Focus-on-Causes Essay (3 Causes)

Topic: Why has remote work become so common?

Thesis statement: There are three main reasons why remote work has become so common in recent years: advances in technology, changing employee expectations, and cost savings for companies.

- 1st body: Technological causes
- 2nd body: Changing employee expectations
- 3rd body: Cost savings for companies

Example Outline 2 — Focus-on-Effects Essay (3 Effects)

Topic: What are the effects of remote work on the economy?

Thesis statement: Remote work has three major effects on the economy: reducing business costs, changing consumer spending patterns, and creating new opportunities for businesses and workers.

- 1st body: Effects on business costs
- 2nd body: Effects on spending patterns
- 3rd body: Effects on access to employment

Sample Essay 1: Why Has Remote Work Become So Common? (3 Causes)

A decade ago, working from home was seen as a rare exception offered mainly to freelancers and a small number of flexible employers. Today, it has become a mainstream way of working for millions of people. There are three main reasons why remote work has become so common in recent years: advances in technology, changing employee expectations, and cost savings for companies.

First, the primary cause behind the rise of remote work is technological. Fast, reliable internet access, cloud-based file sharing, and video-conferencing tools have made it possible for employees to complete most office tasks from anywhere. A decade ago, many of these tools were slow, unreliable, or simply unavailable to the average company. As a result, tasks that

once required a shared physical office can now be completed just as effectively from a home desk.

Second, another major factor behind this shift is a change in what employees expect from their jobs. Many workers, having experienced the flexibility of remote work firsthand, now consider it a basic requirement rather than a luxury. Companies that insist on a full return to the office often struggle to attract and retain talented employees. Consequently, many employers have adopted permanent remote or hybrid policies simply to remain competitive.

Third, remote work has also spread because it saves companies a significant amount of money. Renting and maintaining large office spaces in city centers is expensive, and many companies have discovered that they can shrink their office footprint considerably once most employees stop coming in every day. These savings give companies a strong financial incentive to keep remote policies in place, even after the initial reasons for adopting them have faded.

In conclusion, technological progress, shifting employee expectations, and financial savings have jointly driven the rise of remote work. As all three factors remain in place, remote work is likely to stay a permanent feature of modern working life, rather than a temporary adjustment.

Sample Essay 2: The Effects of Remote Work on the Economy (3 Effects)

Remote work has become an increasingly common part of the modern workplace, changing not only how people work but also how businesses and local communities operate. As more employees work outside traditional offices, these changes have begun to influence the wider economy. Remote work has three major effects on the economy: reducing business costs, changing consumer spending patterns, and creating new opportunities for businesses and workers.

The first economic effect of remote work is the reduction in business costs. Companies with fewer employees working in traditional offices can spend less on office space, utilities, transportation, and other workplace expenses. These savings can allow businesses to invest more money in technology, employee development, or other areas of their operations. As a result, remote work can help companies reduce expenses and improve their financial efficiency.

A second effect is the change in consumer spending patterns. When employees work from home, they may spend less money on transportation, restaurants, and other services located near traditional workplaces. At the same time, they may spend more on home offices, internet services, and local businesses in their residential areas. Consequently, remote work can shift economic activity away from traditional business districts and toward residential communities.

Finally, remote work can expand access to employment. Companies can recruit employees from a wider geographic area instead of limiting their search to people who live nearby. This allows businesses to access a larger and more diverse pool of potential employees. At the same time, workers can apply for jobs in other cities or even countries without having to relocate. As a result, remote work can expand employment opportunities for workers while helping businesses find suitable employees more easily.

In conclusion, remote work has a significant impact on the economy by reducing business costs, reshaping consumer spending, and expanding employment opportunities across

geographic boundaries. As remote work continues to develop, its economic effects are likely to become an increasingly important part of the future of work.

Comparison Essay: Study Guide

A comparison essay examines the similarities and/or differences between two subjects: people, places, ideas, or experiences. Depending on the assignment, a writer may focus **only on similarities**, **only on differences**, or **both**. Comparison essays are common in academic writing because they force the writer to think critically about two things at once, rather than describing each one in isolation.

Comparison Essay: Specific Vocabulary

Language expressing **similarity**:

- X is **similar to** Y in that **both** offer...
- X and Y **share** several important features.
- **Similarly**, / **Likewise**, / **In the same way**, both settings offer opportunities for personal growth.
- **Just as** X provides A, Y **also** provides A.
- **Both** X and Y require a significant amount of time and effort.
- **Neither** X **nor** Y is free from certain drawbacks.

Language expressing **difference**:

- **Unlike** small colleges, large universities often have research facilities available to undergraduate students.
- **In contrast to** city apartments, houses in small towns tend to have more outdoor space.
- **On the other hand**, / **However**, / **By contrast**, the pace of daily life differs considerably between the two.
- **Whereas** commuting in a big city can take over an hour, commuting in a small town rarely takes more than fifteen minutes.
- **While** large universities provide access to a wide range of clubs and events, small colleges often provide closer relationships between students and professors.
- X **differs from** Y in terms of cost, size, and atmosphere.

Comparative structures:

- Public transportation in big cities is **more developed** than that in small towns.
- Small towns are not **as fast-paced as** big cities.
- The cost of living in a big city is considerably **higher** than in a small town.
- A small college campus is **far less** crowded than a large university campus.
- Life in a small town is just **as demanding as** life in a big city, though in different ways.

Comparison Essay Structure

There are two common ways to organize a comparison essay:

- **Block method:** discuss Subject A completely (covering all points of comparison), then discuss Subject B completely, covering the same points in the same order. This method works well for shorter essays or when there are only two or three points of comparison.

- **Point-by-point method:** discuss one point of comparison at a time, addressing both subjects together before moving on to the next point. This method is generally easier for the reader to follow in a longer or timed essay, because the comparison is explicit at every step.

Example Outline 1 — Point-by-Point Method

Topic: Big city life versus small town life

Thesis statement: Although big cities and small towns differ considerably in the pace of daily life and access to services, both settings can offer residents a strong sense of community.

- 1st body: Pace of daily life — big cities vs. small towns
- 2nd body: Access to services and opportunities — big cities vs. small towns
- 3rd body: Sense of community — big cities vs. small towns

Example Outline 2 — Block Method

Topic: Big city life versus small town life (same topic as Outline 1, reorganized as a block essay)

Thesis statement: Although big cities and small towns differ considerably in the pace of daily life and access to services, both settings can offer residents a strong sense of community.

- 1st body (Subject A — Big City): pace of life, access to services, sense of community
- 2nd body (Subject B — Small Town): pace of life, access to services, sense of community
- Conclusion: overall evaluation — the right choice depends on what a person values most

Sample Essay 1: Big City Life versus Small Town Life: Point-by-Point Method

Around the world, people are constantly deciding whether to build their lives in a bustling city or a quiet small town. Although big cities and small towns differ considerably in the pace of daily life and access to services, both settings can offer residents a strong sense of community.

The first major difference between big cities and small towns is the pace of daily life. In a big city such as New York or Istanbul, residents often commute for over an hour, work long hours, and rarely find a quiet moment during the day. By contrast, life in a small town tends to move much more slowly; most residents can reach their workplace within fifteen minutes, and evenings are typically calm and unhurried. As a result, people who value constant activity are often drawn to cities, while those who prefer a slower rhythm tend to settle in smaller towns.

A second difference lies in access to services and opportunities. Big cities generally offer a wider range of hospitals, universities, and cultural institutions, along with more diverse job markets. Small towns, on the other hand, often have limited access to specialized services, and residents may need to travel to a nearby city for certain medical treatments or educational programs. Consequently, individuals who need access to specialized resources may find city life more practical, despite its faster pace.

Despite these differences, big cities and small towns are similar in one important respect: both can provide residents with a strong sense of community. In small towns, this sense of

community often comes from long-term relationships between neighbors who have known each other for years. In big cities, by contrast, community tends to form around shared interests, workplaces, or neighborhoods, rather than long personal history. Either way, most residents, whether in a city or a town, are able to find some form of belonging.

In conclusion, while big cities and small towns differ sharply in pace and access to services, both can offer residents a genuine sense of belonging. Ultimately, the right choice depends on which aspects of daily life — speed and opportunity, or calm and familiarity — a person values most.

Sample Essay 2: Same Topic, Rewritten in Block Method

Around the world, people are constantly deciding whether to build their lives in a bustling city or a quiet small town. Although big cities and small towns differ considerably in the pace of daily life and access to services, both settings can offer residents a strong sense of community.

Life in a big city is defined above all by speed and scale. In a big city such as New York or Istanbul, residents often commute for over an hour, work long hours, and rarely find a quiet moment during the day. This fast pace is paired with wide access to services and opportunities: big cities generally offer a broader range of hospitals, universities, and cultural institutions, along with more diverse job markets. Despite this constant motion, city dwellers are still able to build a sense of community, though it tends to form around shared interests, workplaces, or neighborhoods rather than long personal history. In short, big city life offers speed, opportunity, and a more loosely structured form of community.

Small town life, by contrast, moves at a noticeably slower pace; most residents can reach their workplace within fifteen minutes, and evenings are typically calm and unhurried. This slower pace, however, comes with more limited access to specialized services, and residents may need to travel to a nearby city for certain medical treatments or educational programs. What small towns lack in scale, they often make up for in community: a strong sense of belonging tends to come from long-term relationships between neighbors who have known each other for years. In short, small town life offers a slower pace and closer relationships, at the cost of variety and specialized services.

In conclusion, while big cities and small towns differ sharply in pace and access to services, both can offer residents a genuine sense of belonging. Ultimately, the right choice depends on which aspects of daily life, speed and opportunity, or calm and familiarity, a person values most.

Problem-Solution Essay: Study Guide

A problem-solution essay identifies a specific problem, explains why it matters, and proposes one or more realistic solutions. Unlike a cause-effect essay, which focuses on why something happens, a problem-solution essay focuses on what can be done about it. A strong problem-solution essay does not simply list solutions — it explains why each solution would actually work.

Problem-Solution Essay: Specific Vocabulary

Introducing a solution:

- One way to address this problem is to increase public funding.
- A possible solution to this issue would be stricter regulation.

- A more effective approach would be to introduce educational programs.
- Authorities should consider implementing stricter penalties.
- Raising awareness through public campaigns is one of the most effective ways to combat this issue.

Describing how a solution works:

- This problem could be solved / addressed / tackled / alleviated by raising public awareness.
- In order to overcome this problem, local governments should invest in infrastructure.
- This measure would help to reduce / minimize / eliminate the problem.
- By offering financial incentives, the government could encourage more sustainable behavior.

Emphasizing urgency and consequence:

- Steps must be taken to reduce / minimize / prevent further damage.
- Unless action is taken soon, the situation is likely to worsen.
- If this issue is not addressed, the consequences could be severe.
- If left unresolved, this problem will likely place a growing burden on future generations.

Problem-Solution Essay Structure

There are two common ways to organize a problem-solution essay: presenting one solution, or presenting two or more solutions. The paragraph-by-paragraph breakdown below shows how each version is typically structured.

ONE SOLUTION	TWO OR MORE SOLUTIONS
Paragraph 1: Introduction Hook (background on the problem) Connecting information Thesis statement Paragraph 2: Why the problem matters Paragraph 3: The solution Paragraph 4: Conclusion	Paragraph 1: Introduction Hook (background on the problem) Connecting information Thesis statement Paragraph 2: Why the problem matters Paragraph 3: Solution 1 (with a transition into Solution 2) Paragraph 4: Solution 2 Paragraph 5: Conclusion

Sample Essay 1: Reducing Plastic Waste in the Ocean (Three Different Solutions)

Every year, millions of tons of plastic waste enter the world's oceans, harming marine life and polluting coastlines that were once pristine. Ocean plastic pollution could be significantly reduced through a combination of three measures: banning single-use plastics, expanding recycling infrastructure, and funding ocean cleanup technology.

The first and most direct solution is to ban single-use plastic items such as bags, straws, and disposable cutlery, which make up a large share of ocean plastic waste. Several countries and cities that have introduced such bans have seen a measurable drop in plastic litter within just

a few years. Because these items are rarely essential and easy to replace with reusable alternatives, banning them addresses the problem at its source.

A second solution is to invest in better recycling infrastructure, particularly in coastal regions where waste management systems are often inadequate. Much of the plastic that ends up in the ocean was never properly collected or sorted in the first place, especially in areas without reliable recycling collection. By ensuring that plastic waste is properly collected and processed, governments can prevent large amounts of it from reaching rivers and coastlines in the first place.

The third solution addresses plastic that has already entered the ocean. In recent years, engineers have developed systems capable of collecting floating plastic debris from rivers and ocean gyres before it breaks down into smaller, more harmful microplastics. Governments and private organizations that fund and deploy this technology can remove waste that prevention measures alone cannot address. While cleanup technology is more costly than prevention, it plays an important role in addressing the plastic already accumulated in the ocean.

In conclusion, no single measure is likely to solve ocean plastic pollution on its own, but banning single-use plastics, improving recycling infrastructure, and investing in cleanup technology together form a realistic path toward cleaner oceans.

B2 WRITING PRACTICE PACK

Thesis Writing Practice

For each topic below, write a strong thesis statement that states the topic and previews the main points of the essay. Remember: a strong thesis previews exactly how many points you plan to develop in the body paragraphs.

1. Topic: The effects of social media on teenagers

Your thesis statement:

2. Topic: City life versus countryside life

Your thesis statement:

3. Topic: Solutions to reduce food waste in restaurants

Your thesis statement:

4. Topic: The causes of increasing screen time among children

Your thesis statement:

5. Topic: Should university education be free?

Your thesis statement:

Essay Outline Task

Choose ONE of the topics below. Complete the outline template, then use it to help you write a full five-paragraph essay.

- **Topic A (Cause-Effect):** The effects of remote learning on university students
- **Topic B (Comparison):** Comparing studying at home and studying in a library
- **Topic C (Problem-Solution):** Solutions to improve public transportation in large cities

Outline Template

Topic:

Hook:

Connecting information:

Thesis statement:

Body 1 — Topic sentence:

Supporting details:

Body 2 — Topic sentence:

Supporting details:

Body 3 — Topic sentence:

Supporting details:

Conclusion — Restatement of thesis:

Final thought:

WEEK 1: CAUSE-EFFECT ESSAY

Instructions: Write a well-organized CAUSE AND/OR EFFECT ESSAY on the topic below. Include an introduction paragraph with a thesis statement, at least two body paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph. Support your ideas with specific reasons and examples. The word limit is 250–400 words.

- Not all friendships last a lifetime; many fade or come to an end over time. What are the main reasons friendships sometimes end? Support your ideas with specific reasons and examples.

WEEK 2: COMPARISON ESSAY

Instructions: Write a well-organized COMPARISON ESSAY on the topic below. Include an introduction paragraph with a thesis statement, at least two body paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph. Support your ideas with specific reasons and examples. The word limit is 250–400 words.

- Compare two forms of transportation you are familiar with (for example, traveling by car and traveling by train). Discuss their similarities and/or differences. Support your ideas with specific reasons and examples.

WEEK 3: PROBLEM-SOLUTION ESSAY

Instructions: Write a well-organized PROBLEM-SOLUTION ESSAY on the topic below. Include an introduction paragraph with a thesis statement, at least two body paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph. Support your ideas with specific reasons and examples. The word limit is 250–400 words.

- In many parts of the world, a significant number of adults still cannot read or write. What solutions can you recommend to address this problem? Support your ideas with specific reasons and examples.