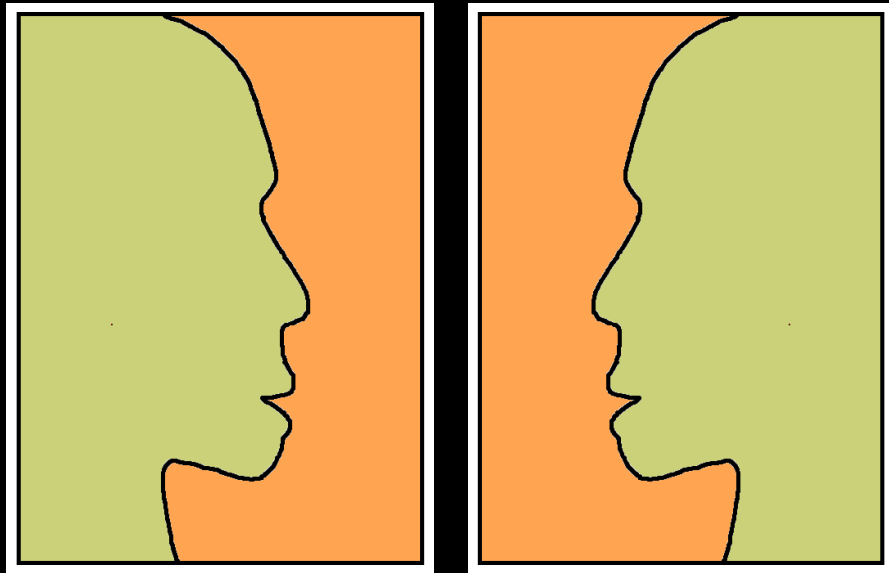


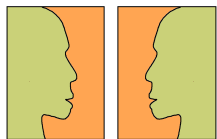
# ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING



A 3-WEEK UNIT FOR  
GRADES 7-12

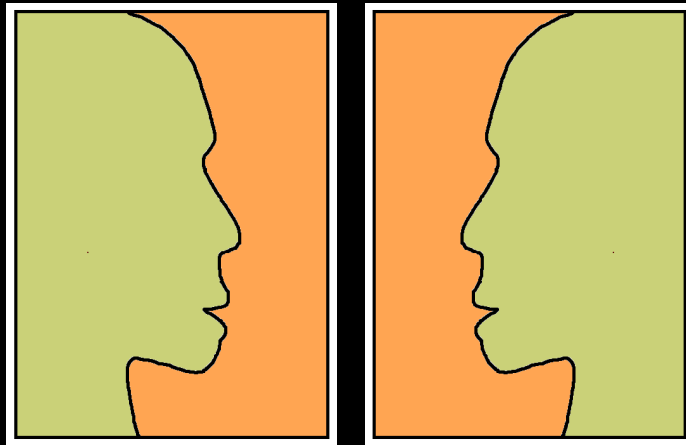


**CULT OF PEDAGOGY**  
TEACHER NERDS. UNITE



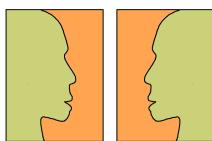
## CONTENTS

Introduction	
Unit Overview	4
Materials	5
The Article Library	6
The Rubrics	7
Going Paperless	8
Teaching Tips	9
Common Core Alignment	10
Unit Plan	11
Performance Assessment	22
Mini-Lessons	25
Writing a Thesis Statement	26
Choosing Evidence	28
Integrating Evidence into Your Argument	31
Considering Your Audience	35
Building Background Knowledge	38
Citing Sources (Now updated for MLA 8)	40
Title, Hook, And Closing	43
Transitions	47
Sample Essays	49
Introduction	50
Sample Planner: Essay 1, Stage 1	51
Sample Planner: Essay 1, Stage 2	52
Essay 1, Draft 1	53
Sample Planner, Essay 1, Stage 3	55
Essay 1, Draft 2	56
Essay 1, Draft 3	58
Essay 1, Final	61
Essay 2	64
Support Materials	66
Student Checklist	67
Looking at Real-World Writing	68
Argument Card	70
Essay Planner	71
Agree/Disagree Signs	72



# MINI-LESSONS

## MINI-LESSON



## WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

A thesis statement is a sentence in which you state your main argument and a brief description of how you will prove it. There are many ways to structure a thesis statement, but we will work with one specific model: concession-thesis-reasons. Here's an example:

Although surveillance cameras may be expensive, schools should install them because they increase safety, reduce vandalism, and keep both teachers and students accountable for their actions.

The first part of the statement is the concession, where you recognize the opposing side's most important counter-argument:

Although surveillance cameras may be expensive,

Next comes the thesis, a simple statement of your main argument:

schools should install them

Last comes a preview of the reasons that support your argument:

because they increase safety, reduce vandalism, and keep both teachers and students accountable for their actions.

Here are a few other examples of thesis statements written in the concession-thesis-reasons format:

While it's true that the person you are inside is what's most important, you should take care of your appearance because it will increase your confidence, it shows respect to others, and it will give you opportunities you might not otherwise have.

Despite the fact that buying locally grown food can be inconvenient, we should make every effort to “eat local” because it’s better for our health, it supports our local community, and it benefits the environment.

Even though serious behavior problems need serious consequences, schools should not suspend students. This practice creates academic problems, it leads to further disciplinary issues, and to some students, it can feel more like a reward than a punishment.

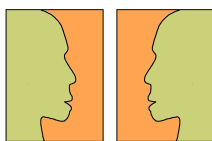
Notice the last example is actually two sentences. Instead of using the word *because* to link your thesis to your reasons, you can simply start a new sentence.

### What to Do Now

Using the **concession-thesis-reasons** style, write the full thesis statement for your essay.

Now move to your [Essay Planner](#) and transfer your thesis statement and three points to that chart. To see an example of this for another essay, look at [Essay 1, Draft 1](#), and the [Essay Planner](#) for that draft. Notice that the three points aren’t previewed in the thesis statement box on the planner, but they are included in the first paragraph of the essay.

## MINI-LESSON



## CHOOSING EVIDENCE

**Types of Evidence**

When you're making a point to support your argument, you need evidence to back that point up. We will study five different types of evidence. Below you'll see examples of these types that were used in the sample essays:

Type of Evidence	Example
<b>Fact or Statistic</b>	<p><i>A 2014 study by the Economic Policy Institute estimated that people with four-year college degrees earned 98 percent more per hour than those who did not finish college.</i></p> <p>(to prove college graduates earn more money)</p>
<b>Story or Anecdote</b>	<p><i>Colleen Conroy took a gap year and discovered her true passion was for writing, not geology, so she switched her major and had a successful academic career.</i></p> <p>(to prove a gap year can help you find the right career path)</p>
<b>Example</b>	<p><i>To become a web designer, real estate agent, or chef, you don't have to have a college degree, but having a degree won't prevent you from getting any of those jobs. On the other hand, you can't become a teacher, an accountant, a doctor, or an engineer without a degree.</i></p> <p>(to prove a college degree increases your job options)</p>
<b>Quote</b> (Expert or Non-Expert)	<p><i>"Now, as a junior, I am happier than ever. I am stimulated by my academic work and enthusiastic about my growth as a writer."</i></p> <p>(to prove that college allows students to try different career paths until they find one they're happy with)</p>
<b>Scenario</b> ("What If" Situation)	<p><i>Suppose you got a 40-hour-per-week job that paid \$10 per hour. Over the course of one year, that's a total of \$19,200. If you could save half—\$9,600—that could pay for a year of in-state tuition at many public 4-year colleges.</i></p> <p>(to prove it's possible to save good money during a gap year)</p>

## Choosing the RIGHT Evidence

When choosing evidence to support your argument, look for evidence that is relevant, sufficient, and credible.

**Relevant** means it actually supports the argument you're trying to make. Evidence that is not relevant may still be on the same topic, but it doesn't prove the point you're making. Suppose you're trying to convince your parents to let you stay out an hour later; you argue that you are responsible and they can trust you to make good decisions.

not relevant	<i>I walk the dog any time you ask, so obviously I can be trusted.</i> (Although doing a household chore shows responsibility, it's not the kind you need to make good choices about safety.)
relevant	<i>You have left me home on my own a few times and everything went fine; that proves I am trustworthy.</i> (This is pretty good proof that you can be trusted in situations where you're unsupervised. Being able to stay out later seems like a logical next step.)

**Sufficient** means there's *enough* evidence to support the argument. You might provide some fact or story that proves your point, but if it's only a small sample, it won't be very convincing. Let's say you are trying to convince your principal to make the school start time later. You argue that students will perform better academically if they wake up later.

not sufficient	<i>I can personally focus much better in my later classes.</i> (This might be true for all students, but only one example is not sufficient to prove it.)
sufficient	<i>A Northwestern University study of over 2,000 students showed that student test scores rose by 10 percent in schools that moved to a later start time.</i> (Because this study observed over 2,000 students, it is stronger proof that a later start time impacts student achievement.)

**Credible** means the evidence comes from a reliable, unbiased source.

Suppose you are trying to convince a parent to only buy locally grown food.

You argue that local food is healthier.

not credible     *The local association of farmers reports that locally grown vegetables have a higher vitamin content than those shipped to stores from across the country.*

(Although this might be true, it comes from local farmers, who would benefit from more people buying local food, so it is less credible.)

credible     *The USDA has reported that locally grown vegetables have a higher vitamin content than those shipped to stores from across the country.*

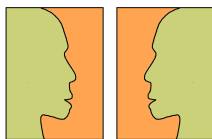
(It's the exact same fact, but because it comes from a federal agency rather than local farmers, it seems more believable.)

### What to Do Now

Go back to your [Essay Planner](#) and begin filling out the evidence you will use to support each of your three points. Is the evidence relevant, sufficient, and credible? If not, start looking for other evidence that will be more effective. If you can't find any, think about changing that point to something else that can be proven with better evidence.



## MINI-LESSON



## INTEGRATING EVIDENCE INTO YOUR ARGUMENT

So you have your evidence. Now, how do you put that evidence into your writing? Basically, there are two ways to do it: **direct quote** or **paraphrase**.

**(1) Direct Quote**

If some of the exact words from the text will make your evidence stronger, then quote those directly, but be sure to put quotation marks around the part that is word-for-word from the text. If you don't, it's plagiarism. Also, only quote the section that is going to help your argument; this is better than including long passages from the text.

By the way, we call it a *quote* because you are quoting someone else's exact words, even if they are written. You might think of a quote as something a person *says out loud* (and therefore gets put in quotation marks), but it works the same way if you are quoting someone else's *written* words, like from an article they wrote.

Suppose you want to convince parents to cut down on the snacks they give their kids. You read a **blog post** by dietician Sarah Renner, and find this paragraph:

I often hear parents say that their kids are "grazers" rather than "meal eaters." In other words, their kids like to snack for most of the day and often don't eat much at meal times. This can be very frustrating for parents. Snacks tend to be less nutritious than meal foods, and they also tend to be eaten on the go, instead of at the table in a non-distracted environment. When snacks are available all of the time, kids won't have the chance to work up an appetite for meals (which tend to be more nutritionally balanced). Kids should be given 2-3 hours between eating opportunities so that they can establish an appetite and distinguish what it feels like to be either hungry or comfortably full.

You'd like to use some of this paragraph to support the idea that frequent snacking can be bad for kids, but quoting the whole paragraph would be letting Sarah write your essay for you! Instead, write your own ideas, supported with one direct quote from the expert:

Another reason snacks should be limited for kids is because it makes their overall daily intake less nutritious. Snacks fill them up, so they don't eat as much of their healthy meals. **Registered dietician Sarah Renner explains it this way: "When snacks are available all of the time, kids won't have the chance to work up an appetite for meals (which tend to be more nutritionally balanced)."** So it stands to reason that cutting back on snacks will make it more likely that kids will eat more at regular mealtimes, and this will improve their overall nutrition.

## (2) Paraphrase

When you paraphrase someone else's ideas, you are summarizing what they said, rather than quoting their exact words. Suppose you wanted to paraphrase Sarah Renner's point rather than quoting her directly. Using the same paragraph as above, here is how you would paraphrase her:

Another reason snacks should be limited for kids is because it makes their overall daily intake less nutritious. Snacks fill them up, so they don't eat as much of their healthy meals. **Registered dietician Sarah Renner points out that snacks are often less healthy and balanced than regular meals, and if kids constantly snack, they never really get hungry for the meals.** So it stands to reason that cutting back on snacks will make it more likely that kids will eat more at regular mealtimes, and this will improve their overall nutrition.

## Putting it All Together

Now it's time to weave those direct quotes or paraphrased information into your paragraphs. A simple way to do this is to follow the **claim-evidence-reasoning** pattern.

The **claim** is where you state your point (one of the three main points of your argument). Usually, this comes first:

Next comes the **evidence**, the proof that your claim is true.

Finally, add **reasoning**, an explanation for how or why your evidence proves your point. Sometimes, this part needs more than one sentence, but in the example, there's just one:

**Another reason snacks should be limited for kids is because it makes their overall daily intake less nutritious. Snacks fill them up, so they don't eat as much of their healthy meals.** Registered dietician Sarah Renner points out that snacks are often less healthy and balanced than regular meals, and if kids constantly snack, they never really get hungry for the meals. **So it stands to reason that cutting back on snacks will make it more likely that kids will eat more at regular mealtimes, and this will improve their overall nutrition.**

## Styling Your Language

Here are some ways you can weave evidence and reasoning into your paragraphs.

### To Introduce Evidence

#### According to (job title & name)...

*According to registered dietician Sarah Renner...*

#### According to (research)...

*According to a 2011 study by Duke University...*

#### (job title & name) says/believes/points out/argues...

*Registered dietician Sarah Renner points out that...*

#### In his/her/their/a (year) (article, blog post, book), "Title," (job title & name) writes/argues, explains...

*In a 2013 blog post, "Five Common Feeding Mistakes That Parents Make," registered dietician Sarah Renner explains...*

#### In a (year) study, (name) researchers found ...

*In a 2011 study, Duke University researchers found...*

### To Introduce Reasoning

#### So...

*So cutting back on snacks will...*

#### Therefore...

*Therefore, cutting back on snacks will...*

#### This means...

*This means that cutting back on snacks will...*

#### It stands to reason that...

*It stands to reason that cutting back on snacks will...*

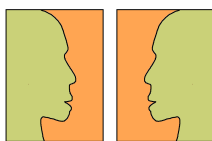
#### This suggests that...

*This suggests that cutting back on snacks will...*

## What to Do Now

Go back to your [Essay Planner](#) and plan the reasoning you will use to explain the value of each piece of evidence. Then start drafting the paragraphs that will make up the main body of your essay—the **Point 1**, **Point 2**, and **Point 3** sections. (We will work on your introductory paragraphs and background knowledge later). Be sure to structure these using the claim-evidence-reasoning pattern.

## MINI-LESSON



## CONSIDERING YOUR AUDIENCE

When you are planning your argument, it is essential that you consider your audience and build an argument that will actually convince them. Ask yourself these questions:

**Who is my audience?**

Although you are writing this in school, you have been given a specific audience to write your essay for. Who is that audience?

**What does my audience care the most about in this situation?**

Although it's easy to look at the argument from your point of view, you will only be convincing if you think carefully about your audience's perspective. What does your audience really care about here? How can you build an argument that recognizes and respects the things that matter to them?

**What counter-arguments will my audience have that I MUST address?**

Your argument will only be effective if you know what your audience's main objections will be against you. These are called *counter-arguments*, and you need to address them in your essay. If you don't, the whole essay will be pointless, because you haven't satisfied your audience's main concern...even if you have made good points, it will still be bothering them.

**How to Address Counter-Arguments in Your Essay**

**Be respectful.** This is the first and most important rule. If you make fun of your audience's counter-argument or treat it as if it's stupid or immoral, your audience will not want to listen to what you have to say; they will be too busy feeling defensive.

**Point out what's true in their argument.** If you can find the part of their argument that you both agree on, your audience will feel heard and understood. You can use phrases like of course, naturally, it's understandable, or even just the word yes to start the place where you acknowledge their perspective. Then describe their position clearly enough so that they know you really get them.

Here are some examples:

Of course you want your kids to be safe at all times; all good parents do. And the thought of giving your kids more freedom must be scary. But if you teach your kids how to make safe decisions and ... (continue with your argument)

Clearly, adding more tables to our restaurant will make the space more crowded, and that may make it harder to walk through. It's possible that this could cause more spills and accidents. Still, this extra risk may be worth it if you consider...(continue with your argument)

### **WHEN to Address Counter-Arguments**

In your thesis statement, you are using a concession-thesis-reasons format. The concession part of that is one place where you already address the counter-argument. Because you don't go into detail about it here, you need to make sure you come back to it later in the essay, using one of these options:

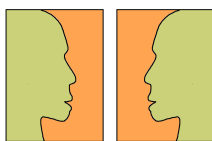
If your audience is most likely to object to one or more of your specific points, address counter-arguments when you're making those points. You could make your point, give evidence and an explanation, then add another sentence or two (or start a whole new paragraph) to address the counter-argument to that particular point. You might only need to do this for one or two of the points if you know your audience will have a specific objection to just those points.

If your audience has a more general objection to your whole argument, you could just give all three of your points without mentioning a counter-argument, but address the counter-argument in an extra paragraph. This extra paragraph could come before you make your three points, or after. Try it in both places to see where it's most effective.

### **What to Do Now**

Look at the argument you already have planned. What would your audience think of it? Which parts will your audience object to the most? What do you need to add or change to make sure you respectfully acknowledge their arguments, then respond to them? Make notes on your draft, showing where and how you will address your audience's concerns.

## MINI-LESSON



## BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

To argue effectively, it's important to make sure that your audience understands the situation or problem you're talking about. To do that, you need to build your audience's background knowledge by describing the situation or problem.

In the two sample essays, the background knowledge is provided right before the thesis statement. Unless your problem or situation is really complicated, you can usually provide enough background knowledge in just a few sentences.

Here's the first paragraph of [Essay 1](#). The part in bold is where background knowledge is set up. After that is the thesis statement:

**College costs are rising every year, and because new technologies make it possible to earn a good living without ever setting foot in a college, some people are suggesting that college is no longer needed for a successful career.**

In fact, some insist that life would be better without attending college. Although opportunities to earn a good living without a college degree do seem to be growing, attending college is still a smart career move for students. It opens up more opportunities for getting a job, it helps you figure out what kind of job is right for you, and it will provide greater financial security over your lifetime.

The same format is used for [Essay 2](#):

**The path to a successful career isn't as clear as it used to be. Years ago, to get a good job, you went to a 4-year college and that was that. Now more people seem to be advising against college: They say it's gotten way too expensive, and if you have good business sense or tech skills, you can make a ton of money without ever attending a single college class.** Trying to decide if college is right for you can be overwhelming, but if you take a gap year—a



year-long break between high school and college—it doesn't have to be. A gap year will give you time to save money, a clearer sense of what career path you want to take, and if you do eventually decide to go to college, you'll probably get better grades than if you'd gone straight there from high school.

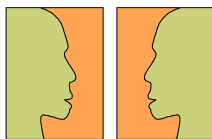
By the way, even if you're pretty sure your reader knows everything there is to know, you should still summarize the situation so that *they* know that *you* understand what's going on. You could start with something like, "As you know..."

### What to Do Now

Look at the draft of your essay. What background information needs to be added to help your audience fully understand the problem or situation you're writing about? Read it as if you know nothing about the situation—what do you need to summarize about who, what, when, why or how a problem or situation has gotten to this point? Add this information in at the beginning of your essay.

Look at Essay 1, Draft 2. This essay has now been revised to add background information and more consideration of the audience's perspective (from the last mini-lesson). All the new writing has been put in **bold** type to make it easier to see.

## MINI-LESSON



## CITING SOURCES

When you use outside sources to support your ideas, you need to give them credit. If you don't, you are plagiarizing another person's ideas—basically, stealing them and pretending they are your own.

To give credit properly, you need to **cite** a source, which tells readers where you got the information. There are a few popular ways to cite sources (called citation styles). For this essay, we are going to use MLA (Modern Language Association) style, 8<sup>th</sup> edition.

This lesson will teach you how to create a Works Cited page at the end of your essay and add in-text citations.

**WORKS CITED PAGE**

The Works Cited page is like a bibliography; it's a list of the sources you used when writing your essay. This page is added at the end of your essay.

**For a regular book:**

Author's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year of Publication.

Pollan, Michael. *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual*. Penguin Books, 2009.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. Puffin Books, 2016.

### For an online article or blog post:

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Name of Website*, Publisher (if different from name of website), Publication Date, URL (without the https://). Date you accessed the material.

Skulnik, Stacey. "Finding Your Passion: Why I Changed My Major." *Her Campus*, Her Campus Media, 5 Oct. 2012, [www.hercampus.com/school/maryland/finding-your-passion-why-i-changed-my-major](http://www.hercampus.com/school/maryland/finding-your-passion-why-i-changed-my-major). Accessed 1 Dec. 2015.

Some more information about the works cited list:

- The date format is **Day Month Year** with no punctuation. Months are written as Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.
- If you can't find the name of the author, just start with the title of the article.
- The second and third lines of the entry are indented. This is called a **hanging indent**, and it's how you're supposed to format your Works Cited list. To learn how to make this happen, watch these videos:  
Microsoft Word: <http://youtu.be/kEcpi98IEns>  
Google Docs: <https://youtu.be/8LvjjnS5y6I>.

## IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Now that you have created a good list of sources, it's time to show exactly what information came from which sources by adding **in-text citations** right in the body of your essay.

To add these, locate the places where you directly quote or paraphrase information from your source. Right at the end of the sentence where you do that, add the first word that appears in that source's listing in the Works Cited list (usually this is the last name of the author) plus the page number where that information appears, in parentheses.

Here's how it would look if you were quoting a line from R.J. Palacio's book, *Wonder*:

In the opening lines of the book, the main character, Auggie, explains how his facial structure impacts other people. "Here's what I think: the only reason I'm not ordinary is that no one else sees me that way" (Palacio 3).

Notice that there's no comma between **Palacio** and **3**, which is the page number where this quote is found. Also, notice that the period that originally came after the word "way" has been moved to **after the parentheses**.

For your essay, you will be mostly citing online sources, which don't usually have page numbers. In that case, you would just put the author's last name in the parentheses:

A 2014 study by the Economic Policy Institute estimated that people with four-year college degrees earned 98 percent more per hour than those who did not finish college (Leonhardt).

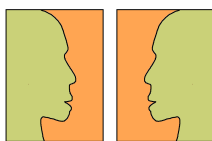
**TO LEARN MORE:** This mini-lesson just covers the citation for a few basic kinds of texts. To see more, visit the [MLA Formatting and Style Guide](#) created by the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University.

### What to Do Now

First, create a Works Cited page at the end of your essay, listing all of the sources you used for your essay in alphabetical order. Next, go through your essay and find the places where you have directly quoted or paraphrased an outside source or text and add in-text citations.

To see this in action, look at [Essay 1, Draft 2](#), which now includes a Works Cited page and in-text citations.

## MINI-LESSON



## TITLE, HOOK, AND CLOSING

**Your Title**

Your title has three important jobs:

- It should make your audience want to read your essay.
- It should communicate the topic of your essay.
- It should hint at what your point of view will be.

A title like “Horrible Behavior” might be interesting, but it doesn’t give the reader a clear sense of what the essay is going to be about. A title like “School is Important” is clear, but it could be more interesting. The most effective titles do all three jobs: they are creative enough to be interesting, but they also convey your topic and point of view clearly.

Here are some different types of titles, plus an example of each kind.

**1-Part Titles****Question**

Could Wiping Out Grades Improve Learning?

**Statement**

It’s Time for Grades to Go

**The Case for...**

The Case for Throwing Out Grades

**“Why” Title**

Why Grades Need to be Abolished

## 2-Part Titles

### Topic: Question

Grades: Should They Be Abolished?

### Topic: Statement

Grades: It's Time for Them to Go

### Creative Phrase + 1-Part Title

A Radical Idea: Why Grades Need to Be Abolished

Quality, Not Quantity: The Case for Throwing Out Grades

## Capitalizing Your Title

When you write your title, you need to capitalize *almost* every word of it.

Here are the rules:

- Always capitalize the **first and last word** of the title, no matter what. If you are doing a 2-part title, also capitalize the first word of the second part.
- Capitalize **all other words except articles** (a, an, the), **conjunctions** (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet) and **short prepositions** (at, by, for, in, of, off, on, to).
- Capitalize short verbs such as **be, am, is, and was**. Even though they are short, because they are verbs and not "connecting" words like those above, they get capitalized.

## Your Hook

The **hook** is the first few sentences of an essay, the part where you are grabbing your reader's attention. It comes even before you build background knowledge or present your thesis statement. Here are six types of hooks, along with an example of each:

### Question or Series of Questions

What does an A really mean? Or a C, for that matter? When a student gets an F, does it mean he didn't learn anything?

### Quote

"In school, many of us procrastinate and then successfully cram for tests. We get the grades and degrees we need to get the jobs we want, even if we fail to get a good general education." —Stephen Covey

### Anecdote

Melissa Thomas thought she was learning a lot in social studies this semester. She had developed a fascination with the ancient Greeks, could tell you all kinds of things about landforms on a map, and was finding herself watching the History Channel for fun. So when she got a D on her report card, she was shocked.

### Statistic or Fact

Teachers may be surprised to learn that most of the written comments they give to students are never even read. That's because if there's also a grade on the paper, many students will just read the grade and ignore the comments.

### Strong Statement

One of the most time-honored traditions of school may be its biggest problem: Grades.

### Description

Your eyes quickly travel down the list: A, A, A-, and then, there it is: a .C. What? How did you get a C? That's right; it's report card time, the time when your performance in school is reduced to a single letter.

## Your Closing Paragraph

The last paragraph of your essay needs to include several things:

- A **restatement of your thesis** and a **brief summary of your main points**. Word these differently from how you did it in the introduction.
- Some **connection to your hook**. Although this is not required, it will make for a more polished and artful essay.
- A powerful, memorable **closing thought**. Here are some options:

### Question

The system we have right now clearly isn't working for everyone; isn't it time we tried something radically different?

### End of Anecdote

Without grades, students like Melissa are left only with their love of learning.

### Positive Prediction

If schools take the brave step away from grades, they're likely to discover something they've wanted all along: Students who truly love to learn.

### Negative Prediction

If we keep the current grading system as it is, many of our students will never know the true joy of learning.

### Powerful Image or Description

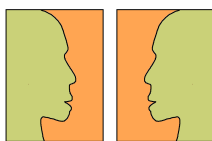
Just imagine it: Instead of asking "What do I have to do to get an A?" students will want to know how they can improve, grow, and learn more.

### What to Do Now

In whatever order you want to do it, draft a **title**, **hook**, and **closing** for your essay. To see this in action, look at [Essay 1, Draft 3](#), which now has a revised title, a new hook, and a closing.



## MINI-LESSON



## TRANSITIONS

In your essay, you are trying to convince a reader to change their mind about something. To make that more likely, you need to be sure your essay is perfectly clear so your reader is never once confused or lost while they read.

One of the best ways to guide your reader through your writing is to use effective **transitions**, words and phrases that show the relationships between ideas. Transitions act as little signposts in a piece of writing to help the reader along.

Take a look at these two versions of the same sample paragraph. The first one does not use transitions:

I think dogs make better pets than cats. Dogs are friendlier. They are more loyal. They are more protective. One time, a strange man was walking in my neighborhood and my dog started to bark. The man left.

If we add transitions, the ideas are more clearly connected to each other. The writing also feels a lot smoother:

I think dogs make better pets than cats. **For one thing**, dogs are friendlier. They are **also** more loyal. **Lastly**, they are more protective. **For example**, one time a strange man was walking in my neighborhood and my dog started to bark. **As a result**, the man left.

### What to Do Now

Using the list of transitional words and phrases on the next page, go through your essay and find places where you can add transitions to connect your ideas and make the reading flow more smoothly.

## Transitional Words and Phrases

### To Add

again  
also  
another  
finally  
first  
for one  
furthermore  
in addition  
lastly  
moreover  
next  
second  
secondly  
third  
too  
what's more

### To Show Time

after  
during  
earlier  
finally  
first (second, third...)  
following  
immediately  
later  
meanwhile  
next  
soon  
then  
when  
while

### To Illustrate

as an illustration  
for example  
for instance  
take the case of  
to demonstrate  
to illustrate

### To Clarify

in other words  
that is to say  
to put it another way

### To Show Cause

as a result  
consequently  
due to  
for that reason  
on account of  
therefore  
thus

### To Show Exception

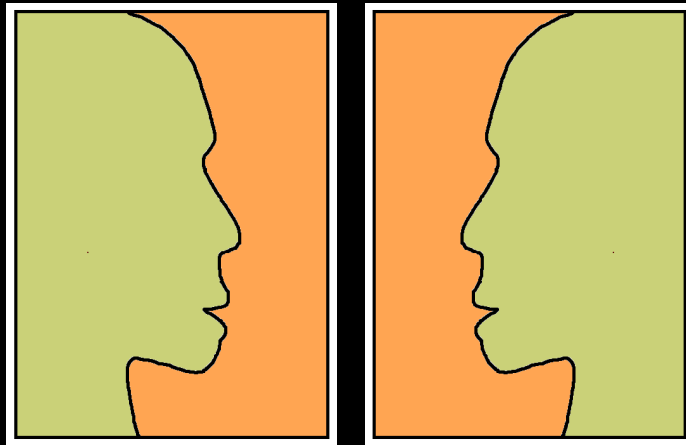
despite  
however  
in spite of  
nevertheless  
of course  
still

### To Compare or Contrast

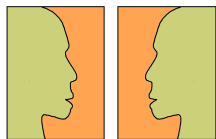
although  
by comparison  
compared to  
conversely  
however  
in contrast  
in the same way  
likewise  
meanwhile  
nevertheless  
on the contrary  
on the other hand  
similarly  
whereas

### To Summarize or Conclude

in conclusion  
in short  
in summary  
on the whole  
to summarize  
to sum up



# SAMPLE ESSAYS



## SAMPLE ESSAYS

On the following pages, you will find sample essays written by two fictional student writers. Both were written for a situation that is similar to the ones assigned in this unit.

Here is the assignment they were given:

**Situation:** Lately, a number of articles have appeared online about why college is no longer necessary. The articles say that because college tuition and fees are increasing, and college debt is causing financial problems for young adults, high school graduates would be better off getting jobs in high-tech companies or starting their own businesses.

**Your Task:** Write an essay to be submitted to a popular opinion website that argues for or against the idea of high school graduates going to college, or proposes an alternate plan that addresses some of the concerns expressed in the debate in a different way.

The student who wrote **Essay 1** chose to write a one-sided essay that argued in favor of the idea of high school students going to college. For this essay, several drafts are provided, along with the Essay Planner completed in stages, so you can watch as this writer builds and improves the essay.

The writer of **Essay 2** chose to propose an alternate plan that wasn't exactly for or against the idea of going to college but addressed both sides of the issue. For this essay, you'll just see the finished product.

Thesis Statement

Although opportunities to earn a good living without a college degree seem to be growing, attending college is still a smart career move for students.

Background Knowledge (clearly describe the problem or situation)

Point 1

Having a college degree increases your chances of getting a job.

Evidence

Reasoning

Point 2

Attending college allows you to explore your options + choose the right career.

Evidence

Reasoning

Point 3

A college degree will help you earn more money over your lifetime.

Evidence

Reasoning

Thesis Statement

Although opportunities to earn a good living without a college degree seem to be growing, attending college is still a smart career move for students.

Background Knowledge (clearly describe the problem or situation)

Point 1

Having a college degree increases your chances of getting a job.

Evidence

- Web designer, real estate, chef don't require college
- Teacher, engineer, accountant, doctor require college

Reasoning

Add # of jobs you can get without college to # of jobs that require it, you get MORE JOBS.

Point 2

Attending college allows you to explore your options + choose the right career.

Evidence

Stacey Skutnik changed her major twice before settling on journalism.

Reasoning

College is a safe place to do this kind of exploration. Plus there are experts and resources right there to learn about other careers.

Point 3

A college degree will help you earn more money over your lifetime.

Evidence

Economic Policy Institute study: people with 4-yr degrees earned 98 percent more per hour than those who did not finish college.

Reasoning

Even if you could earn more right out of high school, in the long term, college grads earn more.



## Yes, College Is Worth It

Although opportunities to earn a good living without a college degree seem to be growing, attending college is still a smart career move for students. It opens up more opportunities for getting a job, it helps you figure out what kind of job is right for you, and it will help you earn a lot more money over your lifetime.

First, having a college degree increases your chances of getting a job. To become a web designer, real estate agent, or chef, you don't have to have any type of college degree, but having a degree won't prevent you from getting any of those jobs. On the other hand, you can't become a teacher, an accountant, a doctor, or an engineer without a degree. The math is simple: The more education you have, the more job options you have. And more options will give you a more financially stable life.

Attending college is also a good career choice because it gives students a safe place to figure out what kind of work they want to do, trying out different things until they find a good fit. That was the case for University of Maryland student Stacey Skulnik, who laughed when she heard that the average college student changes their major twice. "I had always considered myself to be decisive and positive of my future," she said. Then she went on to change her own major—first from business to communications, and then to journalism. "Now, as a junior," she says, "I am happier than ever. I am stimulated by my academic work and enthusiastic about my growth as a writer." Many other college students like Stacey go through the same process: thinking they want to do one thing, but realizing later it's not right for them. Within a college environment, you can explore interests easily, without having to change jobs or move to a new location, and having experts available to help you learn about different careers means you're more likely to find just the right path.

Finally, a college education is more likely to help you earn more money over your lifetime. College graduates earn far more money than those who do not get the degree. A 2014 study by the Economic Policy Institute estimated that people with four-year college degrees earned 98 percent more per hour than those who did not finish college. So even if it seems like you'd be able to earn some good money right out of high school, take a look at the long term and you'll see that college definitely pays off over time.



Thesis Statement

Although opportunities to earn a good living without a college degree seem to be growing, attending college is still a smart career move for students.

Background Knowledge (clearly describe the problem or situation)

- college costs rising every year
- new technologies make it possible to earn a good living without college
- some people think college is no longer needed to be successful

Point 1

Having a college degree increases your chances of getting a job.

Evidence

- Web designer, real estate, chef don't require college
- Teacher, engineer, accountant, doctor require college

Reasoning

Add # of jobs you can get without college to # of jobs that require it, you get MORE JOBS.

Point 2

Attending college allows you to explore your options + choose the right career.

Evidence

Stacey Skutnik changed her major twice before settling on journalism.

Reasoning

College is a safe place to do this kind of exploration. Plus there are experts and resources right there to learn about other careers.

Point 3

A college degree will help you earn more money over your lifetime.

Evidence

Economic Policy Institute study: people with 4-yr degrees earned 98 percent more per hour than those who did not finish college.

Reasoning

Even if you could earn more right out of high school, in the long term, college grads earn more.



## Yes, College Is Worth It

background  
knowledge

**College costs are rising every year, and because new technologies make it possible to earn a good living without ever setting foot in a college, some people are suggesting that college is no longer needed for a successful career.** In fact, some insist that life would be better without attending college. Although opportunities to earn a good living without a college degree seem to be growing, attending college is still a smart career move for students. It opens up more opportunities for getting a job, it helps you figure out what kind of job is right for you, and it will help you earn a lot more money over your lifetime.

considering  
audience

First, having a college degree increases your chances of getting a job. To become a web designer, real estate agent, or chef, you don't have to have any type of college degree, but having a degree won't prevent you from getting any of those jobs. **It might seem at first that there are plenty of options for jobs without ever going to college. But consider all of the other jobs that do require college:** You can't become a teacher, an accountant, a doctor, or an engineer without a degree. The math is simple: The more education you have, the more job options you have. And more options will give you a more financially stable life.

Attending college is also a good career choice because it gives students a safe place to figure out what kind of work they want to do, trying out different things until they find a good fit. That was the case for University of Maryland student Stacey Skulnik, who laughed when she heard that the average college student changes their major twice. "I had always considered myself to be decisive and positive of my future," she said. Then she went on to change her own major—first from business to communications, and then to journalism. "Now, as a junior," she says, "I am happier than ever. I am stimulated by my academic work and enthusiastic about my growth as a

writer.” Many other college students like Stacey go through the same process: thinking they want to do one thing, but realizing later it’s not right for them. Within a college environment, you can explore interests easily, without having to change jobs or move to a new location, and having experts available to help you learn about different careers means you’re more likely to find just the right path.

Finally, a college education is more likely to help you earn more money over your lifetime. **Yes, college costs are rising, and college loan debt can be difficult to pay off, but even with that debt,** College graduates earn far more money than those who do not get the degree. A 2014 study by the Economic Policy Institute estimated that people with four-year college degrees earned 98 percent more per hour than those who did not finish college. **But what about that debt? Doesn’t it cancel out all that extra money? Actually, no: The gap between how much college grads earn and what non-college grads earn is about \$500,000, and that’s after you subtract the debt.** So even if it seems like you’d be able to earn some good money right out of high school, take a look at the long term and you’ll see that college definitely pays off over time.

considering  
audience



## A Better Chance at Success: Why College Is Still Worth It

**Rachael Ray never went to college, and now she's one of the most successful celebrity chefs in America. Mark Zuckerberg dropped out of college after creating Facebook, and he doesn't seem to be doing too badly for himself. Lady Gaga. Tiger Woods. Kanye West. The list of successful people without college degrees just seems to keep growing.** College costs are rising every year, and because new technologies make it possible to earn a good living without ever setting foot in a college, some people are suggesting that college is no longer needed for a successful career. In fact, some insist that life would be better without attending college. Although opportunities to earn a good living without a college degree seem to be growing, attending college is still a smart career move for students. It opens up more opportunities for getting a job, it helps you figure out what kind of job is right for you, and it will help you earn a lot more money over your lifetime.

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in-text citation [

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Going to college uses up a lot of time and money, so it’s tempting to look for other ways to build a successful career without it, **just like Rachel Ray and Tiger Woods. Still, the fact that college offers greater opportunity, exploration, and income makes it a smart choice for most people. Yes, there’s a chance you could succeed without college, but wouldn’t you rather give yourself the best possible odds?**

new closing [

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## ESSAY 2

### The Gap Year: A Smart Choice for the Uncertain Graduate

The path to a successful career isn't as clear as it used to be. Years ago, to get a good job, you went to a 4-year college and that was that. Now more people seem to be advising against college: They say it's gotten way too expensive, and if you have good business sense or tech skills, you can make a ton of money without ever attending a single college class. Trying to decide if college is right for you can be overwhelming, but if you take a gap year—a year-long break between high school and college—it doesn't have to be. A gap year will give you time to save money, a clearer sense of what career path you want to take, and if you do eventually decide to go to college, you'll probably get better grades than if you'd gone straight there from high school.

One of the most practical reasons to take a gap year between high school and college is saving money. Suppose you got a 40-hour-per-week job that paid \$10 per hour. You'd make \$400 per week, which is about \$1,600 per month. Over the course of one year, that's a total of \$19,200. Now of course, you'd have to take taxes out of that, and you probably wouldn't save every penny of it, but even if you could save *half*—\$9,600—that could pay for a year of in-state tuition at many public 4-year colleges, and it could pay for even more if you went to a community college first. Making college more affordable definitely makes it a more attractive option, and if you end up not going to college, you'll still have some good savings, so the time you spend saving will not have been wasted.

A gap year can also help you figure out what you want to do with your life. Colleen Conroy, who took a gap year after taking a few college courses, describes how her time off helped her discover her true passion. Before her gap year, when she traveled through Southeast Asia, she says, "I was a rock-loving geology major. I still adore volcanoes and glacial fields, but I realized

halfway down the Mekong that I'd way rather write about the people and cultures I was encountering—not the rocks lining the banks. When my journey came to its end, I returned to California mentally recharged and prepared to take on all the academics necessary. My gap year saved me a year of floundering amid wasted loans and missed opportunities" (Conroy). Like Colleen, many people need more time and life experience to decide what career they want to pursue. Instead of starting college right after high school, then switching majors several times and possibly wasting tuition money, you could use a gap year to determine the right path for you.

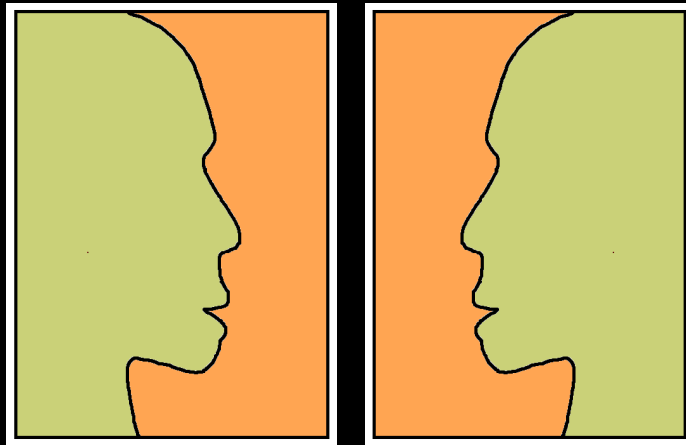
Finally, taking a gap year may actually help you get better grades if you do decide to go to college. A study conducted by Sydney University of over 900 first-year college students found that many of those who took a gap year performed better in their first year of college than those who went straight to college from high school (Boyd & Creagh). If you choose not to go to college, you won't be any worse off, but if you do, it's likely that you'll get more out of it if you take a gap year first.

Going to college doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing thing. By taking a gap year, you'll save money and get a better idea of what career you want to pursue. And when the time comes to go to college—if that's what you decide to do—you'll be more successful as a college student. By taking a little extra time to make this important decision, you're making the path toward a satisfying career much easier to navigate.

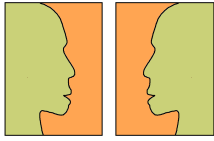
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# SUPPORT MATERIALS



## STUDENT CHECKLIST

Here are the tasks you will need to complete for this unit:

- Choose your topic
- Mini-Lesson: Writing a Thesis Statement
- Mini-Lesson: Choosing Evidence
- Mini-Lesson: Integrating Evidence Into Your Writing
- Mini-Lesson: Considering Your Audience
- Mini-Lesson: Building Background Knowledge
- Mini-Lesson: Citing Sources
- Mini-Lesson: Title, Hook, and Closing
- Mini-Lesson: Transitions
- Proofread and edit your essay for errors.
- Finish and submit your final essay.



## LOOKING AT REAL-WORLD WRITING

**Instructions:** Read the two sample articles, then complete the chart below.

	Recess Article	Suspensions Article
Copy the sentence(s) that most clearly state the author's main argument.		
What facts or statistics does the author use to support his or her argument?		
What stories does the author tell to illustrate his or her points?		
Copy a sentence from the article that shows the author addressing the other side of the argument.		
Copy the sentence from each article that you feel would have the greatest chance of convincing the reader.		



## LOOKING AT REAL-WORLD WRITING

[SUGGESTED RESPONSES: ANSWERS WILL VARY]

**Instructions:** Read the two sample articles, then complete the chart below.

	Recess Article	Suspensions Article
Copy the sentence(s) that most clearly state the author's main argument.	In other words, schools should keep recess on the schedule, and teachers like me shouldn't take it away.	Rather than solving a problem, everything about the traditional way of handling situations like this one only contributes to the likelihood that it will happen again.
What facts or statistics does the author use to support his or her argument?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 17 percent of American children are classified as obese</li><li>• children should get 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day</li><li>• Memory is enhanced by breaks</li></ul>	The author's school has seen drastically reduced suspensions.
What stories does the author tell to illustrate his or her points?	A few lines about her own experiences taking away recess from her students.	The story of Cindy, a girl who threw a tray in the cafeteria.
Copy a sentence from the article that shows the author addressing the other side of the argument.	I've done it, many times. When students fail to hand in assignments or when a child acts up in class, I've taken their recess privileges hostage. I did it both as a way of punishing for bad behavior or as a way to carve out a few extra minutes of learning time in an otherwise packed day.	Now, I don't want to give the impression that restorative justice is some touchy-feely New Age kumbaya.
Copy the sentence from each article that you feel would have the greatest chance of convincing the reader.	Answers will vary.	Answers will vary.

## Argument Card

Your Main Argument	
Reason 1	
Reason 2	
Reason 3	

## Argument Card

Your Main Argument	
Reason 1	
Reason 2	
Reason 3	



Thesis Statement

Background Knowledge (clearly describe the problem or situation)

Point 1

Evidence

Reasoning

Point 2

Evidence

Reasoning

Point 3

Evidence

Reasoning

Agree

Disagree