

# Understanding the Prompt

## Section 1.1 Choosing a Prompt



Writing books usually deal with all types of writing and use different types of prompts or topics. However, the purpose of this book is to help you write an essay that will receive a passing score on the English II Writing Assessment. In order to pass the English II Writing Assessment, you must write an expository essay, a position paper, or a response to literature. By doing the exercises in this book, you will be much better prepared for success when you write your test essay.

Writing a good essay is a process that involves planning, writing, and rewriting. This book will take you through that process step-by-step so that you can gain the knowledge you need for planning, writing, editing, and finalizing the types of essays you may see on the English II Writing Assessment.

### Teaching Prompts

For teaching purposes, we will use the following three prompts to show you how to plan, to write, to edit, and to finalize each type of essay. Notice that one prompt is for an expository essay, one is for a position paper, and one is for a response to literature. These teaching prompts are different from the prompts you will use to write. These three prompts will be used to show you the entire essay-writing process, but you will be asked to apply the same steps to your own essays from the prompts on pages 8 and 9 that you will choose for your writing.

#### Expository Essay Teaching Prompt

Everyone loves to do the things that they do well, and this love usually applies to hobbies and sports. Think of your favorite hobby or sport and why it is an important part of your life. Write an expository essay to inform an interested adult about your favorite hobby or sport. Be sure to include reasons and/or examples that explain how this hobby or sport is important to your life. Support your ideas with specific details.

#### Position Paper Teaching Prompt

Many schools require all students to perform some type of community service, such as cleaning litter in parks or helping in hospitals. Think about whether or not this service requirement is a good program for student learning. Take a position. Write an essay for an interested adult to explain and provide support for your decision. Use reasons and/or examples with specific details to justify your position.

#### Response to Literature Teaching Prompt

Yogi Berra once said, “If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.” Think about this quotation as it relates to setting goals or making future plans. Write an essay for an interested adult explaining your thoughts as they relate to this quotation. Be sure to support your thoughts with specific points and/or examples. You may use points and/or examples based on personal experiences, reading, or observations.



## Section 1.2, continued

### Understanding the Informative Writing Mode

#### Expository Essay

An **expository essay** gives an explanation on a specific topic. This type of essay gives facts, reasons, explanations, or examples with supporting details about the topic. For example, the writer of an expository essay may explain the qualities that make a good friend. Expository writing should clearly *explain* the topic. It should always include a main idea, logical reasons, sufficient supporting details, and a conclusion.

#### Position Paper

A **position paper** takes a position on an issue and gives reasons to support and defend that position. This type of essay will use facts, personal experiences, and/or other kinds of knowledge to support the writer's position. The writer of a position paper picks a side, either for or against an issue. For example, the essay may explain why a writer thinks cell phones should be banned in private businesses or why a high school diploma should not be required for getting a driver's license. A position paper will clearly state the writer's position and then give reasons to support that position. A position paper does NOT use persuasive language intended to persuade the reader to agree with the writer's opinion.

#### Response to Literature

On the Mississippi English II Writing Assessment, a response to literature will be a response to a quote. This type of essay should have a clear point regarding the quote and will support that point with logic or reasoning. The essay will support the writer's point by using personal examples or examples from other sources. These other sources may be from a school subject, like history, science, or literature, or they may be from some other source, like a television program or a newspaper. For example, consider Yogi Berra's quote "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else." A writer may make a point that choosing a career before graduating high school is important. The writer may support that point with examples from history.

Look at the teaching prompts and consider the kinds of essays that would and would not be appropriate for each.

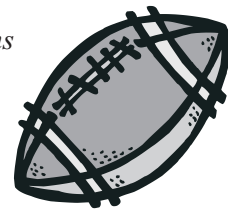
#### Expository Essay Teaching Prompt

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**Example 1:** Look at the introductory paragraph below for an expository essay written for the above prompt. Notice that it correctly uses an informative mode.

*During the fall and winter months, it is a ritual for many fathers and sons to gather around the television on Sunday afternoon to watch NFL football games. Or for many of us in high school, we gather with our friends on Friday nights to cheer on our own high school football team. Why are so many drawn to the sport of football? Football is the all-American sport that unites its fans and has the ability to bring family and friends closer together. For these reasons, it is my favorite sport.*



The writer of this paragraph has chosen football as his favorite sport. The paragraph is clearly informative because it gives the general reasons for this sport being the writer's favorite. In the paragraphs to follow, the writer will give specific examples to show how football "unites its fans and brings family and friends closer together."

# Writing a Paragraph

## Section 2.2 Writing a Topic Sentence



A **topic sentence** tells the subject of your paragraph and the purpose for it. It introduces what you will talk about in your paragraph. The topic sentence lets the reader know what to expect.

An effective topic sentence addresses the subject of the paragraph and leads the reader to the purpose of the paragraph. It gives the paragraph a direction. It is broad enough so that you can include details about it. It should not be so narrow that you have nothing else to say about the topic. Let's look at some examples.

### An Expository Paragraph

Let's say your teacher asked you to write a paragraph about your favorite car. You are instructed to explain why it is your favorite in the paragraph. The subject of the paragraph is your favorite car. The purpose of the paragraph will be to explain why it is your favorite. Your topic sentence tells the reader what you will explain.

Think back to what you learned in Section 1. This type of paragraph would be expository because it explains. Instead of writing one paragraph on this topic, you could possibly write an entire essay. But for now, just concentrate on writing one paragraph.

### Good Topic Sentences

**Example 1:** *My favorite car is the Toyota Corolla for several reasons.*

This topic sentence is simple, but it addresses the subject and conveys the writer's purpose. This topic sentence tells the reader that the writer's favorite car is the Toyota Corolla and that the writer has several reasons for it being her favorite. This topic sentence is broad enough to be explained in the sentences to follow. The reader knows that the rest of the paragraph will give the reasons for the Toyota Corolla being the writer's favorite car.

**Example 2:** *The greatest car on the market today is the Corvette convertible.*

This topic sentence isn't quite as simple as the first one. Even though the sentence doesn't say that the Corvette convertible is the writer's favorite car, the writer implies it by saying it is the greatest car on the market today. This topic sentence tells the reader that the paragraph is about the Corvette convertible and implies that it will explain why it is the greatest car on the market today. Again, this is a good topic sentence for the prompt given.

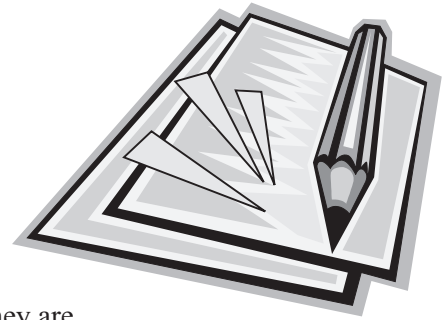
### Bad Topic Sentences

**Example 3:** *I am going to write about the Toyota Corolla.* **No purpose**

This sentence is not a good topic sentence. It doesn't specifically address the subject and purpose, which is to write about your favorite car and explain why. This sentence doesn't say anything about how the Toyota Corolla is the writer's favorite car. Rarely in life should you ever write a sentence like this one. Never start a paragraph by writing "I'm going to write about . . ." It is elementary, it gives no direction to the paragraph, and it gives the reader no sense of purpose for the paragraph.

# Planning The Essay

## Section 3.1 Introducing the Parts of an Essay



Now that you have practiced writing paragraphs, you should be ready to start your essays. When you write an essay, you have to write several paragraphs and use transitions to connect the paragraphs. Writing an essay takes a little more planning than writing a paragraph, but they are still similar in the way they are constructed. For example, both have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

Good Paragraph	Good Essay	
<p><b>Topic Sentence:</b> It is a sentence that introduces the paragraph and indicates what will be included in the paragraph. This sentence is the controlling idea of the paragraph.</p>	<p><b>Introductory Paragraph:</b> It is the first paragraph of an essay and introduces the topic of the essay.</p> <p><b>Thesis Sentence:</b> It is usually the concluding sentence in the introductory paragraph. It indicates what the entire essay will include. This sentence is the controlling idea for the essay.</p>	<div data-bbox="1253 777 1448 850" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"><b>Beginning</b></div>
<p><b>Body:</b> It includes several idea/reason sentences supported by example/detail sentences. Each sentence supports the topic sentence.</p>	<p><b>Body:</b> It includes one or more paragraphs that support the thesis sentence.</p>	<div data-bbox="1253 1150 1448 1224" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"><b>Middle</b></div>
<p><b>Conclusion Sentence:</b> It is a sentence that concludes the paragraph.</p>	<p><b>Conclusion Paragraph:</b> It is a paragraph that concludes the essay.</p>	<div data-bbox="1253 1390 1448 1463" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"><b>End</b></div>

As you can see, writing a well-organized essay is similar to writing a good paragraph. However, an essay is expanded into three or more paragraphs. On the English II Writing Assessment, you will be required to write a minimum of three paragraphs, but a four or five paragraph essay is more appropriate. These paragraphs should represent a clear beginning, middle, and end for your essay.