



Language Arts Lesson 4 *Writing Applications (Grades 4-6)*

Instruction 4-2 *Expository Compositions*

In our last Instruction, we talked about narrative writing. Now we want to talk about **exposition**. The purpose of a narrative is to tell a story. The purpose of expository writing is to communicate information. Description, explanation, comparison/contrast and problem/solution are all examples of this type of writing.

You encounter expository writing every time you read a textbook, newspaper or magazine. In school, you will be asked to write expository essays. In an expository essay, you can tell somebody how to do something. Or report on an experience. Or present and explore an idea. And in one kind of expository composition -- the persuasive essay -- you can even offer evidence to validate an argument.

The Expository Essay

How do you write an expository essay? It begins with the topic. Sometimes your teacher will assign the topic. If you get to choose your own topic, pick one that you can explain fairly quickly. A five-paragraph essay is probably as much as your teachers expect to read.

Once you have your topic, do research. Look up your topic in the encyclopedia or do some personal investigation. Then decide how you feel about your topic -- and why. Before you start to write, you may want to make an outline. If you don't remember how, reread Instruction 2-4.

Developing Your Thesis Sentence

The most important thing in your essay is your **thesis sentence** -- a brief statement that tells what you are going to write about, how you feel about it and why. When you actually write your essay, you can only include material that was presented in this thesis sentence.

How do you develop a good thesis sentence? It can be tough -- so we're going to take you through it step by step. Let's say the topic of your essay is "eating lunch off campus." You might start out by writing this:

Students should be allowed to go off campus for lunch.

Is that a good thesis sentence? No. It doesn't say enough. Although it lets your readers know how you feel about your topic, it doesn't say why you feel that way. So you might want to add something to it -- like this:



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Students should be allowed to go off campus for lunch because our cafeteria food is so bad.

That's better -- but you have only included one reason ("our cafeteria food is so bad"). If you have other reasons that you want to include in your essay, you have to include them in your thesis statement, too. Here's how you could do it:

Students should be allowed to go off campus for lunch because our cafeteria food is so bad, the food at Wendy's down the block is so good and students work better in the afternoon if they've enjoyed their lunch.

Now you have a complete thesis statement. Which means you can put more information in your essay -- and probably get a better grade.

Should your thesis sentence be the first sentence of your essay? No. It's more effective if it comes at the end of your first paragraph. but that means that you have to come up with some words to put in front of it. You could do something like this:

In many schools, kids look forward to lunch, but not here at Jefferson. Some of us would rather not eat than go into our dark, smelly cafeteria. Instead of getting us ready for the rest of the day, lunch here is a downer. **Students should be allowed to go off campus for lunch because our cafeteria food is so bad, the food at Wendy's down the block is so good and students work better in the afternoon if they've enjoyed their lunch.**

Now you've got a good lead-in to your thesis sentence. And a good start for your essay. So it's time to write. Here is the basic structure of the five-paragraph essay:



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Format

Paragraph 1
Introduction

In this paragraph, lead the reader into the essay and present your thesis sentence (we've shown you how in the sample paragraph above).

Paragraph 2
Body Paragraph

Present the most important reason why you feel the way you do about your topic. Include as much supporting evidence and documentation as possible.

Paragraph 3
Body Paragraph

Do the same for your second most important reason (if you have one).

Paragraph 4
Body Paragraph

Do the same for your third most important reason (if you have one).

Paragraph 5
Conclusion

In this paragraph, summarize your support for your thesis sentence. Then restate it (in different words) to conclude your essay.

Here are a few hints. Never introduce new information in your conclusion. Never assume that your readers have any information about your topic. And include as much supporting evidence as you can without boring your readers to death.

As long as you're in school, you'll be writing this kind of essay. So now is the time to learn to do it right.