English 111 Quiz One Notes

Writing Terms, Vocabulary, and Techniques...

1. **Thesis Statement** – A thesis statement is a well-developed sentence (or two) that explains what your paper or essay is about. Think about it as a sentence that states what the evidence in your paper will prove. A thesis statement comes in the introduction, usually in the first paragraph, and it is oftentimes the last sentence of the first paragraph. A thesis statement is a one sentence summary of the main point of an essay. A thesis statement is usually something discussable/arguable. Your essay or paper will provide evidence that will help support/prove your thesis statement.

   According to Temple University’s Writing Center there are 5 qualities of an effective thesis statement.

   Temple University Writing Center www.temple.edu/wc

   **5 Tips for Writing an Effective Thesis Statement**

   An effective thesis statement fulfills the following criteria. It should be:

   **Substantial** - Your thesis should be a claim for which it is easy to answer every reader's question: "So what?"

   **Supportable** - A thesis must be a claim that you can prove with the evidence at hand (e.g., evidence from your texts or from your research). Your claim should not be outlandish, nor should it be mere personal opinion or preference (e.g., "Frederick Douglass is my favorite historical figure.")

   **Precise** - An effective thesis statement has been narrowed down from a very broad subject. Your claim should not be something on which whole books could be written.

   **Arguable** - A thesis statement should not be a statement of fact or an assertion with which every reader is likely to immediately agree. (Otherwise, why try to convince your readers with an argument?)

   **Relevant** - If you are responding to an assignment, the thesis should answer the question your teacher has posed. In order to stay focused, pay attention to the task words in the assignment: summarize, argue, compare/contrast, etc.

   **What's Wrong With These Thesis Statements?**

   1. Frederick Douglass made a speech in which he wondered why slaves should celebrate the Fourth of July. *This sentence is a statement of fact. There is nothing to be argued here.*

   2. Of all examples of persuasive speaking in American history, Frederick Douglass' "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July" is far and away the most effective. *This sentence offers only the writer’s opinion. The writer does not offer arguable criteria for why this speech is effective.*

   3. Douglass' speech is completely ineffective, since he admits early in his speech that the anti-slavery position is self-evidently just and does not require argument. To be persuasive, speakers must always take positions which they and their speakers consider arguable. *This thesis makes a claim that the writer can probably not support with the assigned text.*
4. Throughout American history, brave leaders have stood up against oppression of all kinds. This sentence is much too broad. A more effective thesis would narrow the topic down to a particular leader.

2. **Topic Sentence** – A topic sentence is a sentence that expresses the main idea of the paragraph in which it occurs.

3. **Rhetoric** – The ability to determine all the options a writer has for making a point or argument. The art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques. (synonyms: oratory, eloquence, command of language, way with words) However, sometimes language can be ineffective and the word “rhetoric” can have negative connotations. For example, it can be language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect on its audience, but often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content. (Synonyms in this case would be: bombast, turgidity, grandiloquence, magniloquence, pomposity, extravagant language)

4. **Transition** – A detail that alerts readers to a change of ideas.
   *transitions are phrases or words used to connect one idea to the next
   *transitions are used by the author to help the reader progress from one significant idea to the next
   *transitions also show the relationship within a paragraph (or within a sentence) between the main idea and the support the author gives for those ideas

5. **Essay map** – Many thesis sentences will benefit from the addition of an essay map, a brief statement in the introductory paragraph introducing the major points to be discussed in the essay. Consider the analogy of beginning a trip by checking your map to see where you are headed. Similarly, an essay map allows the readers to know in advance where you, the writer, will be taking them in the essay.

6. **Funnel paragraph** – The funnel paragraph starts with general ideas and ends with a specific thesis. Dr. Barry Hamilton describes the funnel paragraph by saying, “The funnel paragraph starts with a broad topic sentence and narrows down the topic sentence-by-sentence until the end of the introductory paragraph. The paragraph should end with the thesis statement for the research project. By starting with a broad topic sentence, the writer starts with what the reader should already know and moves toward what the reader doesn’t know, but should after reading the paper. The thesis statement connects known and unknown—a bridge to new knowledge.”

7. **Conventions** – Grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.

8. **Content** – What you say and how well you say it
9. **Recursivity** – Recursivity in the writing process is the fluidity of the writing process that allows students to move forward through some steps and circle back to previous steps. While there are basic steps in the writing process (prewriting, drafting, editing, and revising), writers almost always are never satisfied with a “final” draft and continue to revise and edit with each reread.

**The Writing Process – Prewrite, draft, edit, revise...**

Prewriting

The thesis statement

The paragraph

Development - “Scuba dive; don’t lap swim.

Conclusion - “So what??” - Ask yourself, “So what does my evidence prove or suggest about my topic?” Say something profound in this paragraph and tie your information together. Do not simply restate your thesis statement or topic in your conclusion.

**Editing, revising, rewriting, polishing... the nuts and bolts (Sprinkling in higher vocabulary and such)**

Is your essay clearly organized?

Does your essay maintain focus? Is not, why?

Is your writing clear?

Do you use specific details and evidence to support a clear, well-developed thesis statement?

Does your writing have a clear voice?

Does your writing have depth of thought? Did you scuba dive or lap swim?

If writing an argumentative or persuasive essay, have you clearly and effectively made and supported your argument?

Have you proofread carefully? Have you sprinkled in higher level vocabulary?

**A few rules about grammar...**

**You should always proofread for these basic mistakes in conventions:**

Spelling

Subject/verb agreement

Verb tense consistency

Point of view consistency
Mechanical errors

Word choice

Word usage (there, their or they’re)

**Be sure to avoid using fragments and run-ons in your writing.** (See pages 40-45 in *A Pocket Style Manual*)

**Fragment** – Think of a sentence fragment as a piece of a sentence. A sentence fragment is not a complete thought and it lacks either a subject or a verb. You can repair a sentence fragment in one of two ways: Either pull the fragment into a nearby sentence, punctuating the new sentence correctly, or rewrite the fragment as a complete sentence.

**Examples:** We were excited about the football game on Friday night. **Because we were playing Murphy.**

**Corrected:** We were excited about the football game on Friday night, because we were playing Murphy.

**Helpful Hint:** Oftentimes if you begin a sentence with a conjunction, it will be a sentence fragment.

We ate at McDonald’s after the game. **And we ate at McDonald’s the next morning for breakfast.**

**Run-ons** – Run-on sentence are not simply long sentences. Run-on sentences are independent clauses that have not been joined correctly. The most common run on sentence is the comma splice. (See page 43 in *A Pocket Style Manual*)

**Comma Splice/Run-on:** Air pollution poses risks to all humans, however, it can be deadly for people with asthma. **Corrected:** Air pollution poses risks to all humans, but it can be deadly for people with asthma.

**Ways to correct run-ons:**

1. Use a comma and a conjunction (and, but, so, etc.)
2. Use a semicolon.
3. Make two separate sentences.
4. Restructure the sentence.

**The basic types of essay writing...**

**Personal Narrative** – A personal narrative tells the true story of something that happened to you.

**Expository Essay** – According to the Purdue Online Writing Lab, The expository essay is a genre of essay that requires the student to investigate an idea, evaluate evidence, expound on the idea, and set forth an argument concerning that idea in a clear and concise manner. Types of expository essays include: cause and effect, descriptive essays, how to essays, and compare and contrast essays.

• A clear, concise, and defined thesis statement that occurs in the first paragraph of the essay.

It is essential that this thesis statement be appropriately narrowed to follow the guidelines set forth in the assignment.
• Clear and logical transitions between the introduction, body, and conclusion.

Transitions are the mortar that holds the foundation of the essay together. Without logical progression of thought, the reader is unable to follow the essay’s argument, and the structure will collapse.

• Body paragraphs that include evidential support.

Each paragraph should be limited to the exposition of one general idea. This will allow for clarity and direction throughout the essay. It is important to note that each paragraph in the body of the essay must have some logical connection to the thesis statement in the opening paragraph.

• Evidential support (whether factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal).

• A bit of creativity!

Though creativity and artfulness are not always associated with essay writing, it is an art form nonetheless. Try not to get stuck on the formulaic nature of expository writing at the expense of writing something interesting. You are attempting to leave a lasting impression on the people evaluating your essay.

• A conclusion that does not simply restate the thesis, but readdresses it in light of the evidence provided.

This is the portion of the essay that will leave the most immediate impression on the mind of the reader. Therefore, it must be effective and logical. Do not introduce any new information into the conclusion; rather, synthesize and come to a conclusion concerning the information presented in the body of the essay.

Definition Essay – A definition essay defines a word, term, or concept in depth by providing a personal commentary on what the specific subject means.

Cause/effect Essay – This type of essay distinguishes the connections between a certain event and what has caused it, defines what cause is and what effect is in some particular case.

Persuasive Essay – Persuasive writing, also known as the argument essay, utilizes logic and reason to show that one idea is more legitimate than another idea. It attempts to persuade a reader to adopt a certain point of view or to take a particular action.

Response Essay – This is sometimes called a reaction paper and is an essay in which you write about your opinion about a particular topic.

What is the difference between an expository essay and a persuasive essay?

The purpose of expository writing is to inform and explain, whereas the purpose of persuasive writing aims to convince or persuade the reader.