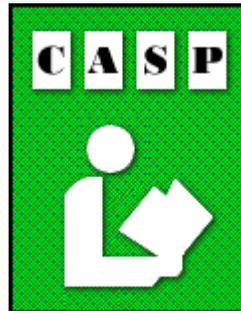


**ACADEMIC STUDIES**

**ENGLISH**

**Support Materials and Exercises  
for**

**WRITING LONGER ESSAYS**



**SPRING 1999**

## WRITING LONGER ESSAYS

## ACADEMIC ENGLISH

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following persons have contributed to the development of this learning material:

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Spring 1999

This support module may be used with IAU-ENG 2.8, Writing Longer Essays.

|             |                       |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| IAU-ENG 2.8 | WRITING LONGER ESSAYS |
|-------------|-----------------------|

| OBJECTIVE   |    |   |       |
|---|----|---|-------|
| Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to  |    |   |       |
| 1.write interesting and effective essays of at least 5 paragraphs in each of the 3 forms: narrative, descriptive, and expository. |    |   |       |
| TEACHING POINTS   |    |   | Level |
| Review  | 1  | Main idea, unity, coherence                     | 8/9   |
|   | 2  | Purpose and audience                            | 8/9   |
|   | 3  | The Writing Process                             | 8/9   |
|   | 4  | Paragraph structure                             | 8/9   |
|   | 5  | Use of transitions                              | 8/9   |
| Methods of Development  | 6  | Types: chronological order                      | 8/9   |
|   | 7  | spatial order                                   | 8/9   |
|   | 8  | importance order                                | 8/9   |
|   | 9  | cause and effect                                | 8/9   |
|   | 10 | comparison (block & point by point)             | 8/9   |
|   | 11 | known to unknown (familiar to unfamiliar)       | 8/9   |
|   | 12 | classification                                  | 8/9   |
| Description   | 13 | The role of description in any essay            | 8/9   |
| Introductory Paragraph  | 14 | Narrative: establish tone/focus                 | 8/9   |
|   | 15 | “grabber” catch reader’s attention              | 8/9   |
|   | 16 | start with action                               | 8/9   |
|   | 17 | Descriptive: “grabber” catch reader’s attention | 8/9   |
|   | 18 | establish tone/focus                            | 8/9   |
|   | 19 | Expository: “grabber” catch reader’s attention  | 8/9   |
|   | 20 | topic sentence (thesis statement)               | 8/9   |
|   | 21 | “blueprint statement” summary of points         | 8/9   |

|                      |    |                                     |     |
|----------------------|----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Concluding Paragraph | 22 | summary                             | 8/9 |
|                      |    | reflections                         | 8/9 |
|                      |    | “clincher” a catchy phrase/sentence | 8/9 |
|                      |    | recommendations (expository only)   | 8/9 |

Learners in IAU may find it extremely difficult to maintain a purely descriptive style in longer essays; therefore, emphasis should be placed on narrative and expository writing.

Learners should read widely as they write. An understanding of essay structure can sometimes be gained when learners create essays based on well-written existing material.

Learners should be encouraged to “share” their writing whenever possible.

## **NOTE TO FACILITATORS AND LEARNERS:**

1. This module presents information and exercises to accompany the objectives of IAU-ENG 2.8, Writing Longer Essays
2. Learners working to complete the requirements of IAU-ENG should review the module, Writing Paragraphs as they progress through this unit.
3. Facilitators are free to use any support materials appropriate to their learners' needs.
4. Additional resource materials will probably be required for those wanting more information on this topic or for those needing more practice mastering certain areas. Any text on writing can provide additional useful material.
5. Alternate support materials may be appropriate.
6. Writing is always the best to learn how to write. Learners should be encouraged to write "real" essays wherever possible in this module and actually publish them in some form: in a classroom anthology, on a bulletin board, the local newspaper, a magazine for distribution to committee members or even at the library.
7. It is the learner's responsibility to search out additional exercises to supplement the practice work included in this module by consulting with his/her facilitator.
8. Learners should read and analyse short articles, stories, and other communications in conjunction with this module.
9. Because writing and reading are so closely linked, learners who master the concepts in this module will generally see improvement in their reading comprehension.
10. Do NOT write in this module. Please make your notes and complete the exercises in your own notebooks so that other learners may also use these booklets.

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## I WHAT IS AN ESSAY?

A single word all by itself does not make a lot of sense, but put several of them together in the right way, and they form a sentence, a complete thought. A sentence is alright on its own. However, if you have a lot to say about an idea, you will need more than one sentence. A group of sentences that work together to explain or support one main idea is called a *paragraph*.

A paragraph is still a fairly short kind of communication, however. If you have a lot more to say, one paragraph will not be enough. Groups of paragraphs may be required. A group of paragraphs, all sharing a common theme or topic, written so that one paragraph leads into the next, is called a *composition* or an *essay*. Essays can be narrative, descriptive, or expository, in exactly the same way as paragraphs can. In Writing Paragraphs, you investigated the writing strategies and techniques required to create a one-paragraph essay. In this module, you will see how these same methods are used to create longer essays.

## II THE WRITING PROCESS: A REVIEW

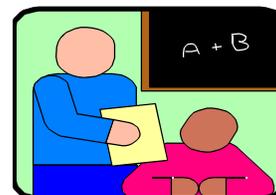
All writing, regardless of its purpose or type, relies on the writing process. Turning thoughts or spoken words into written communications can be difficult without it. This six step process guides the writer from start to finish and works to create an organized whole that communicates a clear and meaningful message.

1. Prewriting
2. Planning
3. Drafting
4. Revising
5. Proofreading
6. Sharing/Publishing

As you become more comfortable with writing, you will probably begin to use these steps simultaneously, switching back and forth between sections as you develop a piece of writing. For beginning writers, however, it is better to follow the steps of the process in order, as outlined in the following pages.

Using the writing process will make writing your essays easier and faster. Most people think that writers pick up a pen and their ideas just flow onto the paper, from the author's brain straight to the words the reader sees on the page. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

All writers go through the six steps of the writing process. Good writers spend a lot of time on the first two stages of the writing process. A lot of thinking needs to go on before the actual writing starts. All this thinking and planning means that you, the writer, have a good idea of what you want to say before you actually begin to put words, sentences, or paragraphs on paper. As a result, your written work will be more meaningful to your intended audience, and the message you send to the reader will be clearer.



## 1. PREWRITING AND GENERATING IDEAS

### a. Select a Topic

Begin by choosing a topic with these ideas in mind.

- \* Write what you know about. Your experience is different from everyone else's. It is your uniqueness that will make your writing different: your experience, your words, your thoughts, your way of putting it all together in sentences, and your organization of these into paragraphs.
- \* Write about what interests you so that you will want to write. This will come through in your finished product.
- \* Write about what you care about. Your writing will reflect your enthusiasm.

### b. Narrow the Topic

Once you have chosen a topic you know about and feel strongly about, make sure the topic can be dealt with adequately in the length of composition you are about to write.

If you decide to write about sports, for example, will you be able to cover all aspects of all sports in five paragraphs? in five pages? or more? This would be impossible, even for a professional writer. Into any library or bookstore, there are shelves of books on sports. If you try to write a five-paragraph essay on this very broad topic, you will quickly become confused and frustrated. Narrow your topic to something smaller, and more specific: ideas that can be reasonably covered in about twenty-five sentences.

Narrowing the topic you have chosen is really a matter of choosing one small aspect of the much larger idea. Ask yourself, What kind of sports? ...Winter sports or summer sports? ...Indoor or outdoor sports? Individual or team sports? Perhaps the answers you gave was...hockey, but hockey is still a large topic. Ask yourself, What kind of hockey? Amateur or professional? Kids or adults? By continuing this process you might arrive at the topic, “Hockey is a good sport for 10 year old boys in a small rural community”. Now, you have something you can work with.



c. Generate Ideas

When you have reached this point in the *pre-writing process*, you may need to “think up” something to say in your essay. There are many techniques you can use to come up with details and supports for your presentation. The module Writing Paragraphs contains some strategies that may make finding these ideas easier.

If you don’t know much about your topic, you will probably have to do some reading (research) to find ideas and facts.

EXERCISE 1



A Choose the topics below which are narrow enough for a short essay (about five paragraphs)

1. Baseball.
2. Growing “Golden Rocket” carrots.
3. Eating spaghetti in Rome.
4. Out of gas and far from town.
5. School is important.
6. Sunset at California Lake.
7. Barbequing at 40° below zero.
8. Democracy is the best form of government.
9. Ice fishing for smelt in Bathurst Harbour.
10. Regular maintenance for your Arctic Cat snowmobile.

B Create a narrow topic suitable for a 5 paragraph essay for each general idea below.

1. relatives
2. gardening
3. travel
4. weather
5. food

C Choose 5 topic areas of your own and narrow each. Make notes to show how you narrowed each topic. Ask your instructor to help you decide whether your ideas are narrow enough.

## 2. PLANNING

*Planning*, or outlining as it is sometimes called, is really a matter of making choices about what you will include in the essay, how you will say it, why you are saying it, how you want the reader to react, and what you want to happen after the reader has read your work.

1. Group ideas that seem to go together.

2. Consider narrowing the topic again.

3 Determine purpose and audience.

Before you begin to write, always think about your audience. Who will read your writing? Your answer will determine how much you need to explain your ideas, the level of the language you will use, and the sentence structures you will choose. The sections of your writing that you will emphasize may change, as well.

Will your essay on hockey for 10 year olds be read by children or their parents? By those already involved in hockey or by those thinking of joining? By those who think hockey is too violent? In each case, the essay you produce should be a little different.

Next, think about exactly what you want to accomplish , your purpose. What do you want your readers (audience) to do when they have read your essay? What do you want them to think? How do you want them to feel?

Taking the time to answer these questions every time you write, will help you decide what to say and how to say it.

Write your purpose and audience at the top of your page of rough work and continue to ask yourself these same questions as write the essay to ensure that you are addressing these two essentials.

Try using the TRAP formula when you are planning an essay.

Topic: Write your narrowed topic.

Role: Create a role<sup>1</sup> for yourself as writer and write it on your paper.

Audience: Choose a specific audience and record that too.

Purpose: Write a clear statement about why you are writing and what you want to accomplish

e.g. Topic:reading

Role: writer of historical fiction

Audience: teenagers in an English class

Purpose: I want to explain why reading historical novels is entertaining -- because reading about real life people can be more fascinating than reading about made-up characters.

I want them to read my books

e.g. Topic:The Kangaroo Islands

Role: I am a travel agent

Audience: Young working couples interested in biology who are planning their first vacation

Purpose: I want to describe three reasons why Kangaroo Island is a nature lover's paradise.

I want them to call me for more information and perhaps arrange a trip.

---

<sup>1</sup> In classroom writing, creating a role for yourself makes writing easier; at home or at work, you are writing for “real” and so your role will be clear.

e.g. Topic: Mexico  
 Role: I am a tourist who had a bad experience  
 Audience: Tourists about to go to Mexico  
 Purpose: I want to write a narrative about buying silver jewellery from a street seller. I want to warn others about how they could be cheated.

e.g. Topic: Lawyers  
 Role: I am a community worker  
 Audience: People from 19-29 who may need a lawyer  
 Purpose: I want to inform them that they can shop around for legal help.

Human beings, especially when it comes to reading, are basically lazy. They will almost always take the easy way out. As a communicator, you must realize that you have only one opportunity to make your message meaningful for an audience. If they find it too difficult, too long, too uncomfortable (physically, emotionally, etc.), they will simply stop receiving the message. They will fall asleep, daydream, or just move on to another task. The writer's most important job is to identify his/her audience's needs, get their attention and hold it just long enough to communicate a clear message.

## EXERCISE 2



Choose any 5 narrowed topics from Exercise 1. Use the TRAP formula, and write the results in your notebook.

It is important to remember that in the “real world”, your purpose and audience will probably be determined for you by your boss or the circumstances under which you are writing (i.e. a letter to your child's school principal complaining that your child is regularly being attacked by older students). When learning to write in the classroom, however, you often have to invent your own purpose and audience for writing. Your instructor is trained to take on the role of the audience you designate and to look carefully at your writing to find your purpose, so don't just write for the “teacher”.

4. Make choices about
- \* the format will you use (memo, poem, paragraph, essay)
  - \* the level of language (slang, informal, formal, etc.)
  - \* the length (one-paragraph, five-paragraph, longer essay)
  - \* type of writing (narrative, descriptive, expository)
  - \* select a working title (to keep you focused on purpose and audience)
  - \* method of development

One of the many choices that writers make during the planning stage has to do with how to organize or develop the ideas they have generated. In Writing Paragraphs, you began to learn about these *methods of development*.

1. *chronological (time) order*  
Details are arranged in the order in which they happened. This method is often used in narrative writing (fact or fiction). As well, it can be found in expository writing, like reports of factual events, accident reports, “how-to” instructions, etc. Events may occasionally be presented out of order for a special effect (i.e. flashback, glimpse into the future, foreshadowing).
2. *spatial order*  
Details are presented according to the space they occupy in the real world. When describing a beautiful lake at dawn, you might start by giving the details you see on your left, and then move on to details found in the middle of the scene, and conclude with details about what you can see to your right. This method of organizing ideas is used often in descriptive writing. (You might also choose to organize the details from top to bottom, near to far, right to left, centre to edges etc.)
3. *familiar to the unfamiliar*  
Details start with the familiar so the reader can understand what you are talking about. Then, details move to the unfamiliar which allows the reader to apply his/her knowledge to something new. Reversing this order and starting with the unfamiliar may make the reader curious enough to read on and then see something familiar in a new light.

4. *importance order*

The writer of an expository essay uses this method to control the force of his/her argument. To be as persuasive as possible, the writer puts the most important detail last where it will have the greatest effect on the reader.

5. *comparison/contrast*

This is a special method of development used to focus on the similarities and/or differences between two things. Comparison means mentioning both similarities and differences. Contrast means presenting only the differences. There are two ways to present comparison/contrast: the block method and the point by point method. In the block method, writers present everything they have to say about one item; then, they write everything about the second item - always being sure to discuss the same points in each block. Here is a model of a comparison/contrast essay on buying a pickup truck using the block method.



|  |
|--|
| Introductory Paragraph   |
| <p>BLOCK I: All the points about a Ford truck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- purchase price</li> <li>- repair record and costs</li> <li>- warrantee</li> </ul>   |
| <p>BLOCK II: All the points about a Chevy truck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- purchase price</li> <li>- repair record and costs</li> <li>- warrantee</li> </ul> |
| Concluding Paragraph   |

If you choose to use the point by point method of comparison/contrast, the outline might look like this:

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| Introductory Paragraph |       |
| Purchase price         | Ford  |
|                        | Chevy |
| Repair record & cost   | Ford  |
|                        | Chevy |
| Warrantee              | Ford  |
|                        | Chevy |
| Concluding Paragraph   |       |

Discuss both vehicles relating to one area (ie Ford costs & Chevy costs; Ford maintenance & Chevy maintenance).

6. *classification*

This method of development is used mainly in expository writing, but can be adapted for descriptive essays. The support details are arranged according to large categories. For example, when organizing ideas for an essay about the beach, you might decide to develop your essay around these three areas: (1) organized activities at the beach (swimming lessons, volleyball, nature walks); (2) informal activities at the beach (paddling in the water, sunbathing, looking for shells); (3) dangers at the beach (riptides, strong currents, jellyfish, broken glass etc.). If you were asked to write about how to succeed in adult education, you might choose classifications like physical requirements, psychological requirements, cultural requirements, emotional requirements etc. Each of these categories would then be turned into a paragraph (or a longer section) of an essay and contain examples to show how each relates to the main idea.

The final decision about which method of development will work best belongs to the writer and depends on the circumstances for each essay. The only rule in making your choice is to give a lot of thought to the order you will use. You should never simply record your ideas in the order in which they come into your head.

## 5. Write a Plan

Many beginning writers think that writing a plan is a waste of time, something the teacher dreamed up for “busy work”. Anyone who wants to communicate clearly, however, knows that a plan is absolutely necessary for success.



Plans are *essential* to effective writing. They do not have to be fancy or even very neat, but you must make a rough “sketch” of what you will say and in what order. No professional writer would dream of starting a project without a little something down on paper.

Once you have spent time thinking about the topic, the ideas you will present, and things like purpose, audience, and method of development, it is time to get an outline down on paper. You must get in the habit of writing a plan or outline. You will be amazed how quickly your work will improve and how much easier writing becomes when you use this strategy.

**DO NOT** write your essay and then complete the plan afterwards, just to satisfy the teacher. You will be cheating yourself of a much better mark.

### EXERCISE 3



- A. Use the TRAP formula to create a specific purpose and audience for each topic below.
1. Being a good parent.
  2. A happy event.
  3. Thunderstorm of the century.
  4. Choosing the right dog for your child.
  5. My most embarrassing moment
  6. Tetagouche Falls.

7. The Right Used Car for a 16 year old.
  8. My Home
  9. Local history
  10. Marriage
- B. Decide what style of writing would be most effective: narrative, descriptive, or expository for each situation. Be prepared to explain your choices.
- C. Which method of development would you choose in each case? Why?

Keep in mind that there will usually be more than one *right* method of development. It's up to the writer to choose one, depending on the situation for writing and the material to be presented.

- D. Write a plan for any 3 of the topics above.

### 3. DRAFTING or WRITING THE ROUGH COPY

The third step is sometimes called *drafting* to remind the writer that the first copy of any piece of writing is only a first attempt which needs considerable fine-tuning.

- a. Write first draft from start to finish as quickly as possible
- b. Do not worry about mechanical errors (spelling, grammar, punctuation) as you write
- c. Double (or triple) space your work to allow for corrections and additions later. Do not worry about producing a final copy at this stage. The important thing is just to get all your ideas down on paper at once.
- d. If you cannot think of a good introduction at this stage, simply write your purpose and get on with the body and conclusion. Writing gives confidence and helps you clarify your ideas; later you may find that the body paragraphs you created will point the way toward a form satisfactory beginning. Sometimes, the conclusion you write for the first draft can be moved to become the introduction.
- e. leave your writing (overnight, if possible) because you need distance to look at your work critically.

#### 4. REVISING

- a. If you wrote your first draft in pen use a pencil for revision. It will stand out, and it can be erased if you change your mind. During all your preparation and writing, feel free to make changes, but do follow your general outline and keep your purpose in mind.
- b. In revising, strive for vivid and concrete details, use synonyms (Use a thesaurus and a dictionary), combine related ideas, vary sentence length, and move ideas if it would improve your message. If you moving ideas around means you would have to rewrite large sections of text, cut out these sections and paste them in the order you wish. Later as you revise again, you can create a new rough copy.
- c. Read the new version aloud.
- d. Revise more where necessary.



Read part of a first draft below, and decide what kind of changes need to be made.

*Five years ago this guy phoned me and my buddy Lex We didn't know what to do. He said that he would sue us because he fell on our property. There was this letter for me. But it got left at his house instead of at our house. We were roommates and we shared this house out in the country. The mailman left the letter there by mistake. He brought it over. He tripped on a crack in the driveway and hurt his back. He said that he couldn't go to work and that he had lost lots of money because of us and our stupid driveway and we owed him lots of money. We were really scared cause we didn't have any money either.*

Here's a revision of the same text. How many and what kind of changes can you find?

*Five years ago, when my roommate, Lex Cotter, and I shared a house in the country, our neighbour John Burke phoned to inform us that he intended to sue us. He had been delivering a letter addressed to me which had been left in his mailbox by mistake. As he approached the house, he tripped and fell on a crack in the driveway. As a result, he hurt his back and was unable to work, which meant he wasn't getting paid. He claimed that we owed him a lot of money. We were really scared because we had never had anything to do with the law or lawyers.*

The details are now arranged in chronological order and there is no longer any repetition. As well some sentences have been combined and the level of language has been raised from slang/conversational to informal. What other changes can you find?

When you have revised your essay for the first time, set it aside again. When you re-read it, try to forget that you wrote it and see it as a stranger would. Is your train of thought easy to follow? Could you make even further revisions?

An appendix at the end of this module contains questions you can use as guidelines for revising your work.

## 5. PROOFREADING

Once you have made a final decision about the content and structure of the essay, it is time to check your work closely for mechanical errors.



- a. Proofread and check spelling, capitalization and punctuation. (Use a dictionary to check words you're not sure of. Use a "spellchecker" if you are writing on the computer.)
- b. Use a Grammar Handbook to check other writing conventions. Check for agreement, case, etc.

- c. Be certain that all your sentences are “good” sentences, not fragments or run-ons.
- d. Read the new version aloud. This will often help you spot errors.
- e. Ask a friend to read your work. Watch to see if he/she re-reads any sections or looks puzzled in places. These are the places you will need to work on because your meaning is obviously not clear. Also, ask your friend to indicate areas where he/she became confused or needed more details.
- f. When you are satisfied that your essay is as good as you can make it, create a final copy. Handwrite it neatly with no errors, or type it. Leave three centimetre margins at the top, bottom, and sides. Some instructors may request that you write your final copy on every other line. Finally create a catchy title.

Chances are, even when you write your final copy you may not be entirely satisfied. Even good writers say that they always feel that there are still improvements they could make.

## 6. SHARING OR PUBLICATION

The ultimate purpose of any written material is to communicate; therefore, writing without communicating with someone else means the process is incomplete.. Make your writing available to others by:

- a. sharing it with a friend or classmate
- b. saving it in a writing file
- c. posting it in a central area
- d. submitting it to a local newspaper/newsletter

## III STYLES OF ESSAYS

Longer essays, like a single paragraph essay, may be *narrative*, *descriptive*, or *expository* (sometimes called *explanatory*).

*Narrative essays* tell stories about events that happen one after the other. Each paragraph advances the plot (action) until all the events in the story have been

retold. Narrative essays usually have a *focus* or dominant impression. If you are writing about a frightening experience, you should make sure that all the details are scary. In many cases, writers choose to omit or change details of a real event that would take away from their focus. The essay may include lots of description in the form of specific details, but they are secondary to the happenings in the story.

A *descriptive essay* describes something with words, creating a strong visual image in the reader's mind and appealing to one or more of the five senses - hearing, sight, smell, touch, or taste. Each paragraph in a descriptive essay describes one aspect of a single scene that contributes to one overall effect. Although some elements of narrative writing may be present, the strongest effect is descriptive.

The third style, the *expository essay*, is made up of a group of explanatory paragraphs. The expository essay explains something; it *informs* and tell *how*, *what* or *why* about a topic. This style of essay can give facts and their implications (informative essay), as well as the author's attitude or opinion and the reasons (persuasive essay). A persuasive essay includes argument and persuasion; the former wants the reader to share the author's opinion, and the latter tries to persuade him/her to act. Some expository essays may contain narrative and descriptive elements, but the essay's main purpose will be to inform or persuade.

1. Narrative - tells a story with actions like a movie does.
2. Descriptive - presents a vivid still picture, like a photograph does
3. Expository - exposes/explains or persuades.

Later in this module, you will learn more about how to create these three types of writing. For now, all you need to know is that *all* writing falls into one of these three categories. Be sure you know the difference before you read on.

#### IV PARTS OF AN ESSAY

The structure of any essay, no matter how long, is similar to the construction of the one-paragraph essay, explained in Writing Paragraphs. In fact, longer essays are just an expanded form of the one-paragraph structure. In longer essays, however, you have more to say, so you need more "room" to express your ideas more clearly and in greater detail. Longer essays create a more vivid picture in the reader's mind, or present longer, more complicated arguments. In other words, where you would have written one sentence in a one-paragraph essay, you would write one or more paragraphs in a longer essay.

Longer essays can be under a page in length or as long as one hundred pages, depending on the topic, purpose, and audience. The best way to learn how to write longer essays, however, is to practice with a structure usually referred to as the *five-paragraph essay*. As the name suggests, it requires five paragraphs: an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Once familiar with the five-paragraph essay structure, you will be able to expand the format and create essays of any length or any type, effectively.

Although quite short, the five-paragraph essay structure is usually sufficient to present your ideas in many circumstance. For example, when writing essay answers on provincial exams (in any subject), five-paragraph essay will usually allow you to provide a full answer. As well, it is a good format for the tests like the GED where you are expected to demonstrate your ability to handle the conventions of English usage, like spelling, grammar, or punctuation. The techniques and strategies you learn to use in this module will also serve you well in any course you take later on or in your job.

Learning to write effectively is not something you can do overnight. The key to becoming a good writer is practice. The more you write, the better you will get. As you progress, you will notice that writing actually gets easier, and you will be able to produce essays in a shorter amount of time.

#### **THE PARTS OF AN ESSAY**

1. INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH
2. BODY PARAGRAPHS
3. CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

#### **V. THE FIVE-PARAGRAPH EXPOSITORY ESSAY**

The most useful kind of writing in the workplace is expository. Almost everyone who is employed must, at least occasionally, write a report: a monthly sales summary, a request for new equipment, an accident report, etc. The

expository essay is also the easiest way to demonstrate the structures and techniques of essay writing.

## 1. THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

Every essay or composition begins with an *introductory paragraph*. A good introduction usually includes three elements:

*A thesis statement*

*A “grabber”*

*A “blueprint” statement*

### A. The Grabber

This is usually the first sentence. Readers tend to leaf through books and magazines, only stopping when something catches their eye. You are writing because you have something important to say, and so you obviously want the reader to stop and take the time to read all of your thoughts. The best strategy to make the reader pause and look at your work is a good title followed by a strong grabber. How likely are you to pause over a piece of writing whose first line is,

*“I want to tell you all about my dog, Rover”*

It doesn't seem too interesting and there is nothing there to arouse your curiosity. In fact, when you read this sentence, you probably think that you already know most of what the writer is going to say....so there is no need for you to read on. The opening below is more likely to get better results.

*“Hairy is more than man's best friend.”*

First, readers wonder “who” or “what” Hairy is. Could it be a dog? Then, they may be curious to find out what makes Hairy more than man's best friend. Once a reader's curiosity has been aroused, he/she is likely to continue reading in order to find out what “is going on” and if his/her guesses were right.

Here are some good ways to create grabbers.

1. Ask a question. We are all trained to want to answer questions. If you

start with a question, readers will automatically start to answer it in their head and then feel curious enough to read on to find out if they are right.

Example: What would you do if you had to go to court?

2. Use a statistic. People have great faith in numbers. If you begin a piece of writing with a statistic, it makes your case more believable. Readers are curious about how the statistics relates to your main idea, and they will read on. Numbers are always very persuasive.

Example: Statistics Canada reports that 93.2% of all adults under 35 have never been involved in recycling<sup>2</sup>.

3. Make an outrageous statement. Begin a piece of writing with an outrageous opinion, or even something that is contrary to your main idea. By arousing an emotional response (perhaps anger or disgust) in the reader, you may make him/her decide to continue reading.

Example: Eating dirt may be good for your health.

4. Quote an acknowledged authority. You can begin your composition with a quotation from someone who knows what he/she is talking about. Most people like to know what the experts think. In general people tend to believe, without question, what an “expert” has to say. Appropriate quotations always increase the writer’s “believability”.

Example: Fred Simpson, the Provincial Coroner says, “Too many fatal accidents are happening in the home.”

5. Use an anecdote. A good way to start an expository is to begin with a brief narrative that relates to the topic you are developing. Readers are often curious about other people’s experiences. When you begin an essay with facts about a real person or incident, it makes everything

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this module, statistics have been invented. Learners may also invent statistics and quotes as they practice their writing strategies in this part of the module. In “real life”, however, all statistics and quotes must be true and verifiable, and, in addition, they must be supported with complete bibliographic information.

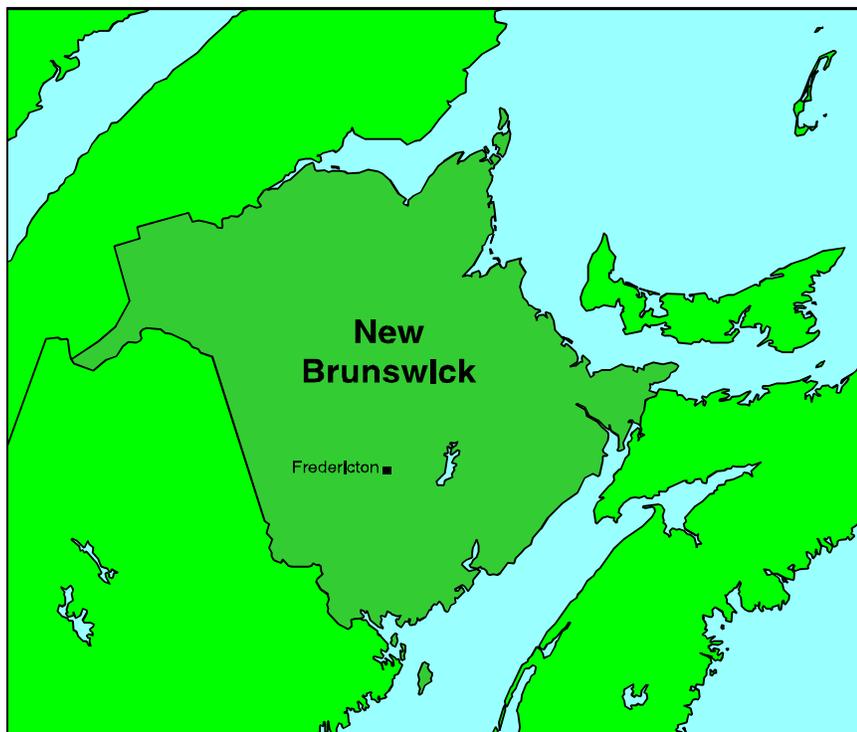
else you write more believable. Sometimes anecdotes take up a whole paragraph of their own and the main idea doesn't appear until the second paragraph.

Example: John Drew, a 25 year old University of New Brunswick student, felt dizzy when he left his last exam in June, but he didn't think much of it and put it down to stress. Two days later, John was in Intensive Care, recovering from a heart attack.

B. The Main Idea or Thesis Statement

Every introductory paragraph must clearly state the main idea the writer intends to develop in the body paragraphs. This is the most important sentence in the whole essay. It acts like a highway sign, pointing the readers towards the writer's destination. Without it, the reader may not be able to follow the information the writer presents.

Look at it this way. Two people (the writer and the reader) who live in different places plan to holiday together. Both people need to know where they are going before the trip starts, so they can meet and share the vacation. Making the destination clear for the reader means spending time creating a strong, clear thesis statement..



Another reason for creating a good thesis statement is that it forces you, the writer, to clarify for yourself what you *really* think about the topic and exactly what needs to be said. Here are some sample thesis statements to go with each of the earlier grabbers.

1. Finding good legal counsel is not difficult when you know what to look for.
2. Young Canadians must be quickly convinced of the benefits of using natural resources responsibly.
3. Many of the trace minerals you need to stay healthy are already part of your everyday life.
4. Make safety a top priority in every part of your home.

### C. The Blueprint Statement

Like the thesis statement, the *blueprint statement* is best used with the expository essay. The blueprint statement is like a “road map” or instruction manual for the reader. In it, the writer briefly gives an overview of the major areas to be explored in support of the thesis statement. Readers need to feel comfortable while they read, and they need to know the general direction the writer is taking, as well as the “stops” planned along the way. Here are examples of blueprint statements. When combined with the “grabber” and the thesis statement they will make a good introductory paragraph even if it only contains three sentences.

When choosing a lawyer, you should consider his/her training, fees, and court room record.

Re-using paper, glass, and metal through recycling will help to guarantee a good life for future generations.

Zinc, iron, and aluminum all play important roles in maintaining good health.

A good home safety audit should cover the living area, the garage, and the basement.

## 2. THE BODY PARAGRAPHS

The body paragraphs of an essay are very similar to the body sentences in a one-paragraph essay, except that each support area is developed into a well-structured paragraph.

It is essential to remember that each of these body paragraphs must also contain a minimum of five sentences: an introductory sentence; three support sentences; and a concluding sentence. In other words, a five-paragraphs essay requires about twenty-five sentences, divided into five paragraphs<sup>3</sup>.

Each paragraph of the body should develop or provide details to support one main point. In the essay on choosing a good lawyer, the blue print statement clearly states that when choosing a lawyer, three separate areas should be investigated: training, fees, and performance. The order in which these are stated in the blueprint statement is the order in which each will be presented in the body of the essay. Why do you think the writer decided to present them in this order? Did they just occur to him/her like this? The answer is “no”; a good writer makes decisions about the order in which ideas will be developed so that the essay will be as strong and effective as possible. In this case, the writer has chosen importance order, with the most important consideration presented last, where it will have the biggest impact on the reader.

The first support paragraph presents the importance of finding out about the lawyer’s training and academic record. This support paragraph contains an introduction, three supports, and a conclusion, all tied together with transitions. Notice also that along with the transitions within the paragraph (*as well, finally*), the introductory sentence not only presents the thesis for this support (*training*) but also provides a transition that demonstrates the structure of the essay as a whole (*The first consideration*).

*The first consideration is training. (thesis statement of first support paragraph...as well as a transition for the essay as a whole) As a potential customer, you have the right and, indeed, the obligation to look into the background of the person you are hiring. (a little extra information to persuade the reader to act) Most lawyers post their diplomas, so you*

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<sup>3</sup> As you get better at writing longer essays, you will be able to ignore some of these strict rules of the five-paragraph essay to meet the specific needs of your purpose and audience.

*should be able to find out where the lawyer went to school. (first thing to find out) As well, don't hesitate to enquire about his/her academic performance. After all, do you really want someone handling your case who only received 65% on his/her exams? (second piece of information to find out) The last thing you need to narrow down is whether this lawyer has had specific training in handling cases similar to yours, so be sure to ask specific questions. (The third kind of information you need) Not until you have done all this research, will you be ready to ask about how much your costs will be. (The concluding sentence also acts as a transition to the second body paragraph where you will develop in the second body paragraph).*

You can easily see how the other two body paragraphs should develop in this expository essay. Write a thesis sentence for the second support paragraph in this sample essay. Remember to include some kind of transition that will tie it into the whole essay.

*Although a good academic background may be a strong indicator, a second equally important factor to consider is cost. (Transition and thesis statement)*

### 3. THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

The concluding paragraph of any essay should signal the reader that the end of the essay is near. There are several ways this can be done. You may write several sentences that summarize or restate the main points you presented in each section. Another way of ending a composition is to reflect on what you have learned or state directly what the audience should have learned. A catchy closing sentence, called a *clincher*, can also be used. Use techniques similar to those for *grabbers* to create this kind of ending. In some cases, especially in factual reports, the conclusion may consist of recommendations, based on the facts presented. Read the following concluding paragraph and decide what method the writer has used in the conclusion.

***Your search for a good lawyer to defend you needs to be thorough. Once you have found out about his/her education, fees, and courtroom experience, you should be in a good position to decide whether this is the person to help you defend yourself in court. Hiring a lawyer out of the phone book may take less time, but it won't necessarily guarantee that you will get the service that you need.***

EXERCISE 4

Use the ideas you've learned so far to write a five-paragraph expository essay. Be sure to follow all the steps in the writing process. You may use one of the topics you narrowed in Exercise 1, or you may choose one of your own.

## VI ADDITIONAL WRITING STRATEGIES

### 1. POINT OF VIEW IN ESSAY WRITING

All essays are written from a specific and *consistent* point of view. There are three points of view that are commonly used: *first person narrator*, *third person (limited) narrator*, and *third person (omniscient) narrator*. Basically, point of view means the person who is “telling” the story/description or making the factual presentation/argument.

1. First person narrator: Use the pronouns , *I, my, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours.*

The first person narrator is part of the action and retells everything that he/she sees from his/her own point of view. This narrator does not know what is going on in other people's minds and can only report what he/she knows.

Example: *I saw the truck sliding towards the steep drop.*

2. Third person (limited) narrator: Uses the pronouns *he, she, him, her, they, their, etc.*

The third person (limited) narrator is also part of the action and tells only what he/she /they know from their own point of view. This kind of narrator tends to put a little distance between the action and the reader.

Example: *He saw the truck sliding toward the steep drop.*

3. Third person (omniscient) narrator: Uses the same pronouns as the third person (limited narrator, but this speaker knows everything that is going on in the minds of every other character.

Example: *He saw the truck sliding toward the steep drop and knew that the driver was sound asleep at the wheel.*

*Narrative* and *descriptive* essays may be written from any of these points of view, depending on the effect the writer wants to create in the reader.

The *expository* essay also must have a consistent point of view but it is usually less obvious because the writer wishes to be anonymous and not intrude into the writing. In fact, it is a general rule that expository essays should never be written in the first person and all direct references to the writer should be omitted. For example, do not start an essay like this:

*In this essay, I will try to persuade you that Ford trucks are better.....*

A better way to start is to make a straight forward statement.

*Ford trucks are a much better buy than.....*

This opening sentence uses a form of the third person point of view, even though the pronouns *he* or *they* are not used. Notice how the author uses this “voice” to speak directly to the reader.

The “you” approach or *second person* is sometimes used in persuasive essays and “how-to” instructions. It appeals directly to the reader and involves him/her almost as though the reader and writer were having a conversation. What point of view is used in this module?

Each point of view has its own effects. The first person point of view makes the stories or other writing more believable and more immediate. The reader (audience) is more likely to find them interesting because it feels like that he/she is hearing the voice of an actual witness to the events, even if the story is fictional.

The third person (limited) point of view has many of the same advantages, but the narrator is able to distance him/herself from the action.

The third person omniscient (a term meaning “all knowing”), uses a narrator who is above the action and can report on everything that happens, even if it is miles away or taking place in someone’s mind. The advantage to this point of view is that the author is able to give the reader more information (usually to advance the plot of a narrative) or to make judgments and preach.

The second person point of view makes a direct appeal to the reader and involves him/her.

As a writer, this is one of the many choices you need to make as you plan your essay.

## 2. WHEN TO START A NEW PARAGRAPH

In general, you should start a new paragraph every time you begin to develop a new idea. If you are handwriting, you should indent the first line of each paragraph about five spaces. If you are typing, you may do this as well, or you may choose to start each line at the left margin and double space between paragraphs.

In expository writing, each new support requires a new paragraph. If a support has several parts that need explanation, each of these may require a separate paragraph.

The body paragraphs in a narrative are relatively easy to handle because they really just tell the story in the order in which it happened. A good rule to remember when you are writing narratives (this applies to other types of essays too) is that you need to start a new paragraph if

1. the location changes (from yard to the garage, for example)
2. the time changes (from morning to afternoon; from one day or month to the next)
3. a new idea starts
4. the “speaker” changes

This last point is really important in narratives. You already know that it is a good idea to include the real words of your characters when you are telling a story. This is called *dialogue*. Often two or more people in a story talk to each other. Using dialogue in your stories makes them more effective and more believable. Every time a different speaker says something, start a new paragraph. If you need more information on how to do this, consult any good English text on the use of quotation marks. You might also take a look at a novel to see how professional authors handle dialogue.

## 3. HOW TO USE TRANSITIONS EFFECTIVELY

Probably the most effective technique you can learn to use in your writing involves transitions. You were introduced to transitions in the previous module,

Writing Paragraphs. Transitions are extremely important and should be used regularly. You may not think to put them into your first draft, but when you edit/proofread your essay, make a special effort to insert transitions, so that your work will flow smoothly, and your reader will be able to follow your train of thought..

In general, here are some good places to insert transitions.

1. at the beginning of every paragraph in the body (optional between the introduction and first body paragraph)
2. at the beginning of the concluding paragraph to let your reader know that you are about to end
3. at various places throughout the body to help the reader see the relationship between one idea and the next.
4. within paragraphs, to show beginning of each new section of support.

Listed below are possible ways to make connections between ideas. The module, Writing Paragraphs also presents information on transitions.

1. *Repetition* of the main idea from the preceding paragraph. Example:  
[last sentence] - All we need to do is see that each child is educated.  
[first sentence - new paragraph] - But what does educated mean; do we mean knowledgeable or well trained?
2. *Transition words* to explain the relationship between ideas.
  - a. to show addition: furthermore, moreover, in addition to, not only-but also.
  - b. to show reason: for example, for instance, as an illustration, in fact, indeed.
  - c. to show contrast: still, yet, but, nevertheless, on the other hand, in contrast.
  - d. to show result: because, since, hence, consequently, as a result, accordingly,.
  - e. to show time: when, meanwhile, next, then, finally, subsequently.
  - f. to show choice, either-or, on the other hand.
3. *Thematic images* are often used to emphasize that the main idea is still the focus. For instance, in a description of a peaceful day in the country, a theme of music could run through the writing with words like *concert, chord,*

*sonata, trill, crescendo, harmony, chorus, choir, etc.*

4. *Synonyms* relating to main idea are good idea. If the central focus is cold, then words like *freezing, shivering, sharp, cutting, icy, etc.* would be appropriate.

#### 4. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TITLE

A strong and catchy title often influences whether a piece of writing is read and understood. The first thing a reader notices is often the title. It should reflect the theme of your composition. Ironic, comic and punning titles are all acceptable. An example of a pun title is "Pam Westman: A Dyed-in-the Wool Weaver" The wording will be make the reader curious especially if it is original and hints at some deeper meaning or philosophic statement.

Some examples of effective titles are given below.

1. Humane Society Dogged by Trouble
2. A New Look at Old MacDonald's Farm
3. The High Cost of a Good Bargain
4. Change: Life's Constant Companion
5. Rub-a-dub-dub: Refinish Your Tub
6. When Going All the Way Means Stopping Short
7. Teachers: Do They Make Hats Big Enough?
8. Patriotic Traitors
9. Jim Carey: The Mask Removed
10. Which Witch is Which?

#### EXERCISE 5



- A. Compose a title for any five essays you have already written in this program.
- B. Compose a title for any three of the topics you have worked on in this module.
- C. Think of a catchy title for an essay written in each of the following areas.

- A. Science fiction
- B. Canada's Air Force
- C. Rock and Roll music
- D. The G.E.D. program
- E. Any topic of your choice

### **EXERCISE 6**



Return to the essay you wrote in Exercise 5. Revise it again, keeping these points in mind:

1. What is the point of view? Is it consistent throughout?
2. Have I started paragraphs in the right place?
3. Have I used enough (or too many) transitions to make my ideas develop logically and my writing flow smoothly?
4. Is my title appropriate? Will it catch the reader's attention?



## VII SAMPLE ESSAYS

Effective narrative and descriptive essays can also be written using the five-paragraph format. These kinds of essays are generally more “creative” and are sometimes referred to as *creative writing*. The techniques and strategies of essay structure are less obvious in narrative and descriptive writing, but they are still there.

An excellent way to build your writing skills, particularly for story telling and description, is to read widely and analyse the techniques used by other writers. If you have a strong reaction, either negative or positive, to a piece of writing, look at it carefully and decided why or how the writer made you feel that way.

### 1. A FIVE-PARAGRAPH NARRATIVE ESSAY

Narrative essays are loaded with specific details and lots of description. In general, the purpose of a narrative essay is to show the reader some aspect of human nature or to help him/her understand a character’s motivation. Many narratives are written to act almost like teaching tools, so the reader can apply what he/she has just read about to his/her own life. For this reason, good narratives have a focus, one element of the story that writer wants to emphasize. When you write a narrative, make sure that you identify the focus of the story in the opening paragraph so the reader will sense your reason for retelling these events. A story without a focus is just a list of events and usually quite boring.

Including dialogue in a narrative creates interest for the reader, makes the events more believable, and helps make the character seem more real.

### **INDEPENDENCE DAY**

*Being a governess in England hadn’t prepared her for a pioneer’s life in Canada, but even so she knew about the bear. “He must be just ahead,” she muttered quietly, “because I can smell the rank odour, like spoiled bacon, that he is leaving behind him.” She also knew that the ten large pails of blueberries she dragged behind her on the makeshift sled might be what kept them all, her little family, alive next winter. The bear tracks she was following in the dusty trail from the bay were large and round and fresh. Her stomach was churning with fear, and she was totally alone here with her two small boys: no roads, no neighbours, no help...just trees, closing in on all sides.*

The first sentence of the introductory paragraph acts as a *grabber* by introducing a dangerous wild animal and Sarah's totally vulnerable position. As well, the reader wonders why or how "she" knew about the bear. Sentence 3 adds questions about why blueberries are so important and who "all" these people are. The last sentence summarizes the main idea (a helpless woman and two small boys threatened by a bear). The last sentence also acts as a blueprint statement which creates the focus (dominant impression) of the story: fear, danger, desperation, and isolation. The reader's curiosity is also aroused with the unanswered question of why she is alone.

*Desperately, she urged Joe and Little Alex to catch up and walk right beside her. They were bone-tired too and had fallen farther and farther behind. The best she could do was lean into the rope harness she had made to pull the sled, hold their hands, and put one heavy foot in front of the other. At last, she could see the front field and the peak of her tiny cabin, but she could also hear the cows, Maggie and Blossom, bellowing frantically. The cows obviously scented the approaching bear and were desperate to break out of the pasture where she had left them that morning, for safety's sake. She was going to have to manage somehow on her own, something she'd never had to do before.*

The first body paragraph sets the story in action as Sarah is returning home after a long day picking blueberries. The danger is heightened by the sound of the cows and a new idea is introduced...Sarah is very tired. Notice the use of "time" transitions (*at last, when, that morning*) to show the passage of time. As well the reader is reminded that Sarah is not used to relying on herself.

*Somewhere she found strength she didn't know she had and scooped up the boys, one under each arm. Then, she made a dash for the house, but the heavily-laden sled slowed her dreadfully. At last, she reached the yard and practically threw the boys through the back door while she shrugged off that awful harness and followed them, slamming the door behind her and leaning against it. Then, as she fought to get her breath, she saw through the kitchen window, that three of her berry buckets had spilled onto the ground and the bear was pushing his muzzle into another one. Anger straightened her spine. That bear was going to eat all her berries, and they'd have none left to see them through the winter.*

This second body paragraph develops the events from the middle of the story...Sarah gets home safely. The seriousness of the situation is further underlined by the fact that their lives are threatened indirectly because the bear is eating their winter food. More “time” transitions are used. (then, finally)

*She raced to the closet for Fred’s gun. She’d never fired a gun, but she’d seen Fred do it often enough. She eased up the window, crouched and then sighted the rifle. She’d never killed anything in her life, but that bear was eating the very berries that were meant to keep her family alive. She held her breath, squeezed the trigger and waited for the bear to fall. The animal looked startled but then shoved its ugly nose back into the bucket, munching greedily. She must have missed. Again she aimed, this time more carefully. She pulled the trigger. The bear jerked backward, turned and staggered several yards, and then collapsed. Wearily, she stood up, returned the gun to the closet, and slumped over the table, trying to gather herself together.*



The last body paragraph concludes the action - Sarah has killed the bear and saved her children and the berries. The theme of tiredness holds the whole story together and is woven throughout with words like *bone-tired* (par 2), *one heavy foot in front of the other* (2), *heavily-laden sled* (3), *wearily, slumped* (4), and *sighing with exhaustion* (5).

*Sometime later, just as the sun was dipping over the trees, she straightened up and thought to herself, “Well, that’s that.” She fired up the woodstove, gathered the spilled berries, washed and sorted them, and at last started the work of boiling them up for canning. Sighing with exhaustion, she realized that tomorrow she would have to do something to get rid of that bear carcass before it started to stink. Maybe Fred would get back from town, the boat loaded with the scant winter supplies he’d gone to fetch. Maybe he’d get home and look after it, but if he didn’t, she knew she could handle it herself.*

The concluding paragraph sums up the action and adds Sarah’s reflections about her husband never being around and her new-found ability to handle any situation. The final paragraph also answers the reader’s question about where her husband is.

EXERCISE 7

Answer in full sentences, and include proof from the essay to support your answers.

1. Where do you find the main idea in this story? Where is it presented?
2. What point of view does the writer use? What effect does it have? Could this story be told from another point of view? What effect might this have?
3. In your opinion, what is the writer's purpose for recording these events?
4. Describe a possible audience for this story.
5. What method of development is used?
6. List the transitions that hold the body paragraphs together? Include synonyms and repetitions.
7. List the transitions that hold paragraph 3 together.
8. What techniques does the last paragraph use to end the essay?
9. Use the facts and hints in the essay to explain who Sarah is and what her everyday life must be like.
10. Are there any words in the story whose meaning you are not sure of? List them. Based on the story, guess at their meaning. Look them up in the dictionary and check to see how accurate your guesses were.
11. Think of some ways to "share" this story.

## 2. A FIVE-PARAGRAPH DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

### *A SONG FOR EVENING*

*Twilight on Deep Bay is my favourite time.*

This introduction breaks the five sentences per paragraph rule. This can be done occasionally, if the situation warrants. Here simply introducing the topic, along with the title is sufficient to establish the main idea and suggest the *dominant impression* or focus of the piece.

*My eyes absorb the world around me. Above, the sky is a swirl of rose and peach. Every cloud has a silver lining, as they and the dark shadows of the bush are reflected on the calm, even darker water. At*

*the water's edge, the pale grasses bend to see their own reflection.  
There's beauty in every glance.*

The first support paragraph begins with a statement of its main idea, visual pleasures. The support sentences within the paragraph develop this idea with examples of things that the writer sees. The details in this paragraph are arranged in spatial order, starting at the top of the scene (the sky) and moving toward the bottom (the water's edge). The concluding sentence summarizes the support points and reflects on their impact, the beauty of the scene.

*My ears soak up the nighttime sounds. In the distance, a loon's call floats hauntingly over the water. Nearer, I hear the nighthawk's scratchy voice as he trolls for mosquitoes in the air above. Then right beside me, my evening companion, a fat, young beaver slaps the surface of the water one more time before he paddles off to bed. Serenity follows, and my soul is at ease.*

The second support paragraph has sounds for its main idea. The details are also arranged in spatial order, but this time from far away to close up. The concluding sentence reflects on the impact of the sounds, serenity for the soul.

*My nose catches the evening's rich perfumes. First, a breath of spicy pine demands my attention. Then, the damp, mossy smell of the deep forest sweeps past as it moves out of the woods and skims across the still water. Finally, the crisp, nose-twitching scent of wood smoke reaches me. Now, someone has lit the campfire, and night is complete.*

The last support paragraph focuses on smells. Here the details are arranged chronologically and lead toward the sunset, the end of the day and the end of the essay. Notice the concluding sentence and its effect.

*When all these parts of twilight converge, and darkness quietly descends on my world, I know how lucky I am to be on Deep Bay as night falls.*

The final concluding paragraph is almost as short as the introduction, but it restates the main idea well.

EXERCISE 8

Answer in full sentences and include proof from the essay.

1. What is the topic?
2. What is the main idea?
3. What is the dominant impression of this scene?
4. If the writer included the following sentence, would it be appropriate? Why? Why not? *I can't help shivering and pulling my sweater close around me as the damp cold rises off the bay.*
5. What method of development has been used?
6. How are the body paragraphs tied together?
7. How is paragraph four tied together?
8. What method was used to create the conclusion?

### 3. THE FIVE-PARAGRAPH EXPOSITORY ESSAY

Read the following expository essay. The first sentences grab your interest and arouse your curiosity by using a first person anecdote (narrative). The third sentence provides the main idea, that the essay will be about how Doberman Pinschers are mean to some people and gentle with others. The remaining sentences of the introduction provide an overview of the points the writer will make: the history of this breed as well as their role in small business and in the family. This essay follows the five-paragraph essay structure closely.

*Duke is a Doberman Pinscher and definitely the scariest dog I've ever met. He bares his teeth and snarls every time I deliver a parcel to Dooley's Autobody. I am sure one day he'll sink those sharp teeth into my ankle and then settle down for a long slow lunch, but his master assures me that he is just a big friendly baby once you get to know him and he gets to know you. When I asked Jack Dooley, his owner, why Duke acted so mean, he answered by saying, "They are bred that way, and that's just how I like 'em...they make great watch dogs for small businesses like mine and keep my security costs down, but they're really good with children or anyone they know."*



The body paragraphs are mostly written in true expository form, the anonymous third person, and each one develops a main support. The first body paragraph presents the history of the Doberman Pinscher. The second body paragraph presents their gentle family side. In the third body paragraph, the writer presents the opposite side of the Doberman's personality.

*The man who first bred this kind of dog was Karl Friedrich Louis Doberman in Germany in 1870. He had always dreamed of having a dog that was reliable with its owner yet fiercely protective. Doberman used several breeds to create the dog he wanted: Thuringian Shepherds, Rottweilers, Black and Tan Terrier (Pinscher), Black Grey Hound, Great Dane, German Short haired Pointers, and a Weimaran. The result was a large shorthaired animal with a lean sinuous body and a sharp snout. Its personality is just what he hoped for, loyal to its human "family" and intelligent enough to spot and respond to possible danger.*

*Bailey's Encyclopaedia of Dogs states that "the Doberman Pinscher is really quite childlike. It likes lots of attention, but is a sensitive dog, keenly alert to his owner's feelings." (65) Owners report that they are good natured, reliable, and easily trained. Dogs, like Duke, regularly play vigorously with their owner's small children without harming them. Bob Jefferys, a small town vet, owns two Doberman Pinschers who have been raised with his three children, and he enthusiastically reports he has never seen anything in their behaviour to worry about. Studies by the American Doberman Association have also shown that these dogs are no more likely to be involved in vicious attacks than most other large breeds. "The people who are threatened are those who don't have any right to be there," says vet Bob Jefferys.*

*On the job, however, they snarl ominously, snap at pant legs, and will sometimes charge at someone who looks or acts suspiciously, but they are only doing what they have been trained to do, protect their owners and their property. They make excellent watchdogs because they are suspicious of all strangers and aren't afraid to act aggressively if the intruder continues to approach. They are big, powerful, and mean looking. That's what makes them so popular with small business owners who can't afford a high tech security system to protect their investments.*

Notice how the concluding sentence of paragraph 3 acts as a transition and introduction to the main idea of paragraph 4 (above). Using transitions to join body paragraphs is a very effective way to give your essays a smooth flow.

*Doberman Pinschers are an interesting breed whose popularity is on the rise. They are well behaved and kind when dealing with those they know. On the other hand, they make excellent guard dogs because of their dislike and distrust of strangers. Maybe the next time I have to deliver a parcel, I'll try a little harder to get on Duke's good side. I would much rather love him than fear him.*

The concluding paragraph of any essay should signal the end of the composition. There are several ways you can do this. You may write several sentences that summarize or restate the main points presented in each section. Another way of ending composition is to reflect on what you have learned or state directly what the audience should have learned. In some cases, especially in factual reports, the conclusion may consist of recommendations, based on the facts presented.

Read the concluding paragraph above once more and decide what method the writer has used in the conclusion.

This essay is an expository. You should notice that it appears to break the rule about not writing expository essays with the first person point of view used in the introduction and conclusion. When you retell personal stories like this, it is called an anecdote.

### EXERCISE 9



Answer in full sentences and include proof from the essay.

1. What is the main idea?
2. What kinds of proof does the writer use to support the thesis of this essay?
3. What effect does the writer's anecdote have on the reader?
4. What method has the writer used to create the conclusion?

5. Is this an informative or persuasive essay?
6. Create a title for the essay.



### EXERCISE 10

Here are some more sample essays. For each one provide the following information:

1. The topic
2. The main idea
3. The dominant impression or focus
4. The type of writing (narrative, descriptive, etc.)
5. The method of development
6. A list of transitions that tie the paragraphs together
7. Examples of transitions within paragraphs
8. Examples of synonyms and repetition used to provide coherence
9. Several examples of figurative language
10. The point of view

## *PICKING YOUR POISON*

“Don’t lick or pick; you’ll get sick.” Plants in the home, the garden, and nearby woods can be dangerous. Did you know that more than 700 species of plants in North America are in whole, or in part, poisonous because they contain chemicals that attack the nerves, the muscles, the blood, or all three? As the popularity of herbal remedies grows, more and more people may be tempted to think that if it grows, it must be good for you. It’s important to know which plants are safe and which ones can be dangerous.

House plants make your home beautiful and help clean the air, but some of them carry potent poisons. The stems and leaves of the philodendron are toxic as are the same parts of dieffenbachia, caladium, and star-of-Bethlehem. The attractive red fruit of the Jerusalem cherry are particularly potent and easily draw the attention of curious toddlers. As well, all parts of those radiant azaleas sold in every grocery store are poisonous. Yet another popular house plant, the umbrella plant, needs special attention. These plants, members of the scheffleria family, produce a spray of fronds from a central stem and should be kept out of reach of children who might try to nibble on them. It’s a good rule to teach children not to touch the plants.

In the garden, this rule is even more important. First, flowers are beautiful to look at but tulip, daffodil, iris, and hyacinth bulbs are poisonous. If eaten, any part of buttercups, rhododendrons, and lily-of-the-valley are very dangerous. Although castor oil may be a good laxative, ingesting even one bean from this plant can kill an adult. Second, even garden vegetables can be dangerous. The vines and leaves of potatoes and tomatoes contain solanine so hand washing is essential after working in the garden. Rhubarb leaves contain oxalic acid and the seeds, bark and leaves of apples, peaches, plums, and cherries contain cyanide. Keeping the family safe, especially children, means strict rules about what they put in their mouths and how they handle plants.

In the country side, there are even more risks. People who are anxious to gather herbs that are free for the picking need to know exactly what they are gathering. The deadly mountain laurel, called the suicide plant by the Delaware Indians, looks just like the tasty wintergreen, and poison hemlock, used to execute Socrates, can easily be mistaken for wild carrot. Mushrooms, of course, are notorious for poisonings and should only be gathered by someone who is well trained in plant recognition. Not matter how attractive, it’s always a good idea to leave any woodland plants that you aren’t really sure about where they are.

In conclusion, no matter whether plants grow in the house, in the yard, or in the forest, some of them can be dangerous when handled or eaten. The best rule to teach children and to follow yourself is that even natural things can be harmful. Look but don't touch; admire but don't eat.



UMBRELLA PLANT

## Three Boys and a Dad

**“Good bye, sweetie. Have a good day,” Brad called. He closed the door slowly as he anticipated a whole day to rest and relax. The newspaper, the TV talk shows, even the back deck were all definitely possibilities on this his first day off in months. It was just seven o’clock and time stretched delightfully before him. “This will be like a walk in the park,” he’d told Sue. “I’ll look after the kids for you, and you can go visit your mom for the day.”**

**Things started well, but just after eight, his three little “raggamuffins”, still tousled with sleep, trotted down the stairs in their jammies and crawled into their chairs with shouts of “beckfust daddy”. When food hadn’t appeared within thirty seconds, Randy began using his spoon on little brother Alex’s head as if it were a drum. Alex, being musically inclined, started to shriek in time to the beat while Mike, his first born, turned into a background singer and chanted “Where’s my toast, where’s my toast, where’s my toast, do wop do wop” in the background. Brad realized that the newspaper would have to wait for a few minutes.**

**Life deteriorated after breakfast. Mike wore Randy’s underwear on his head and Alex shrieked until they were returned. Randy hogged the bathroom and locked himself in which caused Alex to shriek because he was going to wet his pants. Nobody could find clean socks, although their drawers were full of them, and someone named “not me” had spilled a whole glass of orange juice into the basket of clean clothes. The talk shows really weren’t really that interesting anyway.**

**By ten o’clock, things were definitely out of hand. The family’s entire inventory of Lego, some \$587 worth at last count, had been dumped on the living room floor, and Alex was methodically depositing it, piece by piece, into a floor-level heating vent. Meanwhile, Mike had indulged his creative side by decorating the kitchen wall with a six colour finger-painted mural. Randy, thankfully, appeared to be reading quietly in the family room, but closer inspection revealed that he was eating raspberry jam straight from the bottle with his hands. Brad realized that sunning himself on the back deck was definitely not on today’s agenda.**

**At exactly 11:17, Brad picked up the phone and dialled the Sunny Brae Daycare. “I suddenly have to go into work and my wife’s away.**

**Can I bring the boys over in a few minutes?” The answer was obviously “yes” because Brad was smiling.**

## SPEED KILLS

The accident occurred on a long straight stretch of four-lane highway just outside Moncton at 7:45 a.m. A wide band of dense fog had suddenly descended on the roadway, and drivers had braked to cope with the reduced visibility. Those behind them, travelling at speeds of 110 kilometres an hour, didn't realize the danger hidden the fog and drove into hell, a forty-seven car pileup that left more than a kilometre of wrecked metal and injured people.

In the left hand ditch, two eighteen wheelers lay on their sides; the metal of their trailers was crumpled like blackened tinfoil after a barbeque. The first one was still intact, but the roof of the second had split open and spilled a mountain of cargo, neatly boxed television sets, into the muddy water below. From its engine, a plume of greasy black smoke was rising lazily, and the click of cooling metal sounded like gun shots. When a light breeze sprang up, it carried the thick smell of burned rubber and spilled diesel fuel. Behind the semis and stretching almost to the horizon, a zigzag pattern of burned out cars and vans looked more like scattered dominoes than the shiny, expensive vehicles they had been only minutes before.

The highway itself was barely visible. Every inch seemed filled with twisted chassis, shattered glass, and people. Some stood frozen in horror, their hands to their faces, as they realized how closely death had brushed past them. Others ran frantically through the tangle of debris with no purpose in mind, arms flailing and voices uttering screams and groans in an off key symphony of horror. Somewhere a child wailed in pain, and in the distance, a car horn blared on and on and on.

The right hand ditch was strangely empty of crushed vehicles except for the cause of it all, the mangled body of deer, draped over the guard rail. Behind it, flashed hundreds of red and blue lights from the police cars and ambulances that had begun to arrive. Their sirens were silent now, but the crackle of two radios was everywhere. In the background where the carnage stopped, the traffic jam began. Miles and miles of impatient drivers were drumming their hands on steering wheels and fidgeting.

Once the wreckage was cleared, they would rubber neck through the scene and mindlessly set the cruise at 110 kpm again. Only a few would take this horror as a warning for more than a minute or two. Then when the timing

was right and the weather bad enough, there would be a repeat performance of this hellish “accident”, probably just down the road somewhere.



## A Tiger's Tale

**Just the other day, a scruffy orange and black tiger tail surfaced in a box of workroom junk we've carted across the country and back in our many moves. My three adult children, home for the holidays, giggled self-consciously, and my husband smiled tolerantly. But this insignificant 60s artifact transported me back to memories I didn't even know I had..just as surely as the smell of fresh-baked bread carries me instantly to my mother's kitchen.**

**The occasion was my first full day of marriage;**

**The date: August 29, 1965;**

**The place: an Esso station just west of Brampton.**

**Our honeymoon, two weeks of romance at the family cottage on Georgian Bay, was to be a thrifty affair, dictated by our decision to marry before finishing university and establishing a career. There we were early the morning of the 29th, driving our old and cantankerous Volkswagen. It started with a hiccup and grew rapidly to a series of frightening balks, but it wasn't long before we saw the Esso sign. Not only would we get help but also we could use our first joint possession, an Esso credit card.**

**The problem was minor and the proprietor friendly. My new husband emerged from the office with that crooked, little grin I've come to know so well. "Here's a present for you," he said as he attached the tiger tail to our gas tank cover. "Now that we've got a tiger in our tank, and there isn't anything we can't handle."**

**That was 32 years, 3 children, 7 moves ago, and many challenges ago. The tiger tail was eventually demoted to the glove compartment, then to the work bench in the garage, and finally to the basement workshop. Over the years, I had seen it less and less often, and in our last move, I suppose someone threw it into that box of odds and ends.**

**The tiger tail has gone back into that box now, and there it will stay, until it surfaces again, as a memento of the fact that "there isn't anything we can't handle."**

**The next essays are longer than five paragraphs, but they still follow the basic rules of essay writing structure. What style of essay is each one? Can you find the topic, the main idea, the writer's opinion, the method of development and the supports for her opinion.**

## Ode to the Maritime Verandah

Verandahs are rare these days. In most of Canada, this time-honoured institution has faded away, and many old buildings have been conscientiously stripped of this offending appendage to reveal (and I quote a friend) “the architectural strength of the facade.” Reason enough for a design expert, but we’ve lost more than the drudgery of verandah maintenance.

Although I had often bemoaned the disappearance of the verandah before I arrived in northeastern New Brunswick, their continued existence here in the Maritimes didn’t register with me at first. Perhaps it was because I was overwhelmed by New Brunswick’s biggest and most obvious asset, trees. Years living the Northwest Territories had put trees high on my list of tourist attractions.

It wasn’t until I settled in and met my new neighbours that the importance of the verandah started to work its way into my consciousness. It was a hot, sultry summer, and I was having trouble adjusting my body thermostat to the “southern” climate. The heat of the day dragged me mercilessly into a stupor and the evenings brought no relief. I spent hours draped on my couch wishing for air conditioning. Then my neighbours started to invite me for coffee after dinner and we would rock and talk and watch the world go by from their front porch until the sun went down and the sea breeze began to sweep in with that tang that lets you are in the Maritimes.

“What’s the biggest difference about living in New Brunswick,” my neighbour asked one night. I started to give my standard answer about the blessings of living with trees when suddenly it struck me. The biggest and best thing about New Brunswick was the verandah. Not just the structure itself, but the way of life it encourages.

First, the verandah is a social tool. It’s much more than the dictionary definition of “roofed open gallery or portico attached to the exterior of a building” would lead you to believe. It’s a place where friends and family gather to put their feet up and share their day. It’s casual, it’s cool, and it invites the passerby to “stop awhile”. Coffee and beer appear magically with the arrival of each new visitor, and the conversation

wanders lazily over a geography of topics from the health of a local spinster to the war in Bosnia. Everyone is included, young and old alike; every opinion is savoured before the talk veers in another direction. Verandahs are the friendliest places I can think of.

Then, of course, there is the comfort issue. With its open sides and slanting roof, the verandah makes a wonderful refuge on a summer afternoon. Put a couple of good rockers, complete with homey squeak, close to the railing. Prop your feet up, lean back on sun-faded cushions, and wait for those little puffs of breeze that come just often enough to keep the flies away.

Verandah, I recently discovered, is a Hindi word. Who better to understand and do something about oppressive heat than the people of Northern India, whose seasonal retreats into the mountains in search of coolness have a long history.

Afternoon verandah sitting is pleasant, but there is nothing to compare with a New Brunswick evening in the open air. Even before the sun touches the western horizon, the air starts to refresh itself. The intense heat dissipates and lifts its weight from your body. Then in those few minutes after sunset when the sky is a palette of rose and peach something elemental begins to stir. Does it start in the bushes behind the wood pile or over beyond the creek? It's a moist earthy smell that insinuates itself into your awareness. It's not a breeze, not yet anyway. Perhaps it is what poets call a zephyr. Whatever it is, it is a promise of relief soon to come. The verandah conversation weaves itself along until finally about ten o'clock, all the front porch sitters sigh heavily and finally relax for the day. Within minutes, the fingers of an onshore breeze wrap themselves around the railings and columns. Day's done and all's right with the night.

Verandahs are emotional things too. Ask any Maritimer what a verandah is and they'll start to talk about summer and playing with cousins all day on, under, or on top of the verandah. A whisper of a smile creases their cheeks and a far away look comes to their eye. Verandahs are home and family. They are security and love. They may be one of those things Maritimers return home for so regularly. Memories of grandma's porch or aunt's lemonade emerge and dance with stories of siblings who inevitably did outrageous things. I remember some of those things from my childhood too, but in New Brunswick the verandah is still there for yet another generation enjoy. For a while, even in New Brunswick, everyone went modern and built patios and decks onto the back of their bungalows where the barbeque and the lawn chairs

migrated along with the picnic table. But you're not part of the world in the backyard. You've got to be out there in sight of the road or the sidewalk if you want the delights of the verandah culture. Thankfully, it's never been lost here in the Maritimes.

It has taken us five years to catch on, but this summer we practically lived on our verandah. We entertained there; we ate there, we laughed and talked there. In fact, we even sang several songs there late one August evening. We're comfortable in the Maritimes now and a lot of it has to do with our introduction to the verandah culture.



## If April's here, can spring be far behind?

Spring arrives late in northern New Brunswick. The rest of the country rejoices in crocuses and tulips, and we're still wading through crusty black snow, waiting apprehensively for that last rogue blizzard. Television reporters from Halifax to Vancouver are backed by rich green lawns splattered with a rainbow of blossoms, but Dave Crase still huddles in his parka on a main street somewhere on the Chaleur Tundra.

Spring in the Prairies comes like a surprise, but here in New Brunswick, we not only do things differently, we do them better. In March, we savour each sunny hour and drink deep draughts of summer memories. The raucous call of a single gull sparks interest at coffee break, and a slow snow melt raises cheers everywhere...no wet basements or severe flooding this year! We're not so interested in speed as in the texture of each little sign of returning warmth. In bank or post office lineups (where all important conversations take place), neophyte New Brunswickers may conversationally offer, "Who in their right mind would live in this climate?" No one ever answers the question; we just change the topic to who's buying a new sail boat, or who's expecting company from "away" this year.

Perhaps it's anticipation that makes spring better here. It arrives so slowly that we have time to appreciate its smallest tokens. Our sensitive ears hear a robin's trill or a songbird's warble more clearly because we await it so impatiently.. Even the dank earthy smell of last autumn's leaves emerging black and mouldering from a snow drift has its special pleasure.

Would we be so appreciative if spring arrived full blown? I doubt it! As April creeps along, checkout counters sprout kaleidoscopic racks of seed packets and draw crowds of optimistic gardeners. Each packet is read; each picture is visually digested; each flower grows in the imagination.

May might mean the end of snow, but we still have weeks to wait until the ground warms and the greening really begins. Even then, so farmers say, it's not until the first full moon in June that we can put the garden in, position the picnic table, and relish the lawn mower's buzz saw whine. By mid-June, crowds of lupines cascade and dance in every ditch, and armies of grey-green aspen flutter and "shush" their way to the horizon.

At last, spring has slid silently into summer.

## *PEDAL PUSHERS*

In some countries, bicycles are holding their own as the transportation of choice in urban centers. According to Gary Gardner, a senior researcher at the Worldwatch Institute in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., bicycles now account for 20 to 30 percent of all trips in major cities in The Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. In some Chinese cities, bicycles account for more than half of all trips. By contrast, bicycles are used for less than one percent of all trips in Canada and the United States today.

But Gardner detects a positive spin for bikes in cities world wide. More and more local governments are recognizing that bikes reduce pollution and traffic noise, contribute to the health of the rider, and in many instances “outperform other forms of urban transport.”

One indication of a growing cycle of acceptance for the two-wheelers, says Gardner, is the interest shown by police departments. He writes that Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, designated its all-bicycle Quick Response Team as the first line of defense in protecting the 18 heads of state attending the November 1997 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. Vancouver’s parking enforcement employees have proven more productive on bikes. “Cycling officers easily navigate congested downtown areas and do not lose time searching for parking spaces. These officers make rounds four or five times per shift, in contrast to the two or three times typical of car-bound workers. As a result, one officer estimates that the increased access has boosted his revenue collections by two-thirds.”

The International Police Mountain Bike Association, formed in 1992, estimates that more than 2,000 police departments in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Iceland, and Russia have bicycle units with some 10,000 officers on bikes.

(Reprinted with permission from The Rotarian, November 1998. p.8)



## *The Doll's Tea Party*

The coat collar itched my neck and the matching camel hair leggings chafed the insides of my legs. The back of my head pinged and smarted from my freshly-made braids. Clearly, my grandmother and I were going calling.

Going calling was an unpredictable entertainment for a 7 year old. Depending on the destination, the outing could range from deadly dull to mildly interesting, but even at that young age, my romantic nature always hoped for more. Perhaps we'd see Aunt Alice whose cranberry glass candy jars were reliably filled with rainbow gum drops and mouth-filling hard white mints. Or horrors, we might visit the stiff-backed parlour of one the church auxiliary ladies who offered warm ginger ale and grainy digestive biscuits to "dear little girls". But then again, it might be a trip to Aunt Wyn's rambling Victorian house. There, I could usually leave the ladies while they visited and tiptoe up the broad front stairs, open the stained glass door on the landing and whisk down the maids' stairs to the summer kitchen below, deliciously pursued by whatever ghosts my imagination chose to conjure -- an adventure endlessly repeated unless, of course, I forgot to tiptoe.

But I didn't know our destination that day because, as any child knows, adults frequently forget to share such details with youngsters. So later that sharp fall afternoon, I found myself trotting down the hill beside my grandmother. Finally, I dared ask, "Where are we going today?"

"To see Nell," she said absently. Not Cousin Nell, not Miss Ready, but just Nell. Something interesting was definitely possible.

Cousin Nell was my absolute favourite. She presided over an elegant Carnegie library artfully poised at the top of an impossibly high flight of stairs. When you finally pushed open the heavy glass door, you knew that you had entered a special place -- high ceilings, graceful pillars, the spicy mustiness of old book dust, and a heady feeling of freedom. While my grandmother visited, I would browse the world through newspapers neatly speared on bamboo wands, thumb through adult books filled with enticing pictures, or encounter an attentive older gentleman in the reading room. After all, that

was an age when older men were avuncular<sup>4</sup> and not the source of lurid suspicion.

Our steps headed further down hill now, pulled by something more than gravity. This was going to be a rare afternoon.

But it seemed we weren't headed for the library today. We passed the turning and headed for downtown. My grandmother walked purposefully past the grocer's; her step never slowed as we passed my grandfathers' shoe store; even Furtney's Bakery with its precise rows of freshly baked bread passed unnoticed.

Then, an abrupt left turn brought us face to face with a narrow doorway between Smith's Jewellers and the hardware store. I followed my grandmother up the long dark stairs to a corridor whose doors punctuated the hallway like sentries in the dusk.

Could Nell live here in obscurity above these stores? Had I somehow misunderstood our destination? Perhaps we were on an errand of charity and good works. Only poor people lived over stores. Of that, I was fairly certain.

At the third door on the left, we knocked. Nell greeted us. She looked different, shrunken slightly, like an over-ripe fruit collapsing in on itself. But her voice was firmly familiar as she pointed at me and said, "Whose child is this?"

"Margaret's, of course," my grandmother said impatiently.

Gratefully, I removed my scratchy coat and leggings. Before following the ladies into the living room, I peeked into the kitchen and saw a small white table neatly set for tea. My spirits rose as I thought of all the wonderful things to eat this woman, who catalogued the world, would surely provide for her guests. This afternoon was going to rise above the merely interesting to something in the truly memorable category. Of that, I felt sure.

Then I entered the narrow living room, lit only by the sepia light that filtered through the thick curtains. Quietly, I looked around for the most interesting location to spend the rest of the afternoon, someplace near some big fat books

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<sup>4</sup> Like an uncle

with lots of picture so I could entertain myself unobtrusively. Where were the books I had expected to see lining the walls, the newspapers from foreign capitals? Not a one. The woman who presided over the town library appeared not to own a single book.

I settled myself into a huge soft armchair covered in a dark plushy material that I saw had been carefully mended in several places. My chair wore antimacassars<sup>5</sup> in some unusual locations, and when I lifted them I discovered that each one covered a shiny bare spot where the plush had been worn away by years of use.

Seven is the age at which children begin to see adults and relatives as something more than two dimensional characters of the here and now. Slowly, they begin to learn that adults have backgrounds, motivations, depths and passions, that they have a life that extends beyond the confines of the room in which the child sees them. My grandmother and Nell seemed ready to chat for a long time, so as their voices faded into a background drone, I guiltlessly began to indulge in my favourite time-passer, thinking. For a while, I considered the contradictions of this dark little apartment and the lofty rooms of the library where I had always seen Nell before. But I could make nothing more of it than simply to note the peculiarity and file it for future reference.

A tiny china horse cantered along a shelf's edge just above my head so I considered why only white horses were thought to be lucky. Why, there was even a rhyme and an elaborate game of foot stamping, which I had just mastered, to ensure that you and only you got the good luck. What a silly idea! Didn't people realize that palominos<sup>6</sup> were far prettier and that the word palomino rolled more easily round the side of your mouth? What about bays and roans? I'm not really sure to this day what these colours are, but they certainly sounded far more interesting than just plain white.

From there, my thoughts rambled. What did an "Island of Red Roads" have to do with chickens<sup>7</sup>? I wondered about the half empty bottle of whisky, I had just

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<sup>5</sup> Crocheted lace mats, usually place on the backs and arms of upholstered furniture to protect them from dirt and grease.

<sup>6</sup> A kind of horse that is pale gold to cream in colour and has a flaxen or white mane and tail.

<sup>7</sup> Rhode Island Red is a breed of chicken popular in the mid-1990s.

discovered behind the cast iron bathtub in my grandmother's bathroom. At our house, we kept such things in the cupboard in the kitchen -- far more convenient than running to the bathroom when company arrived. And what about those kittens from next door? Mr. Daley said he gave them to the milkman, but we went to the milkman's house the other day to buy some extra butter and he only said, "What kittens?" when I asked to see them.

The afternoon slid onward as I drifted between my own thoughts and occasional attention to the ladies conversation. Phrases like, "be sensible", "eviction", and "trust fund" tweaked my curiosity as my youthful emotional-antennae picked up adult intonations and movements that translated into impatience and sadness, perhaps even pity, on my grandmother's part. Try as I might, the gist of their words remained a mystery. But I was used to these long, endless afternoons of self-entertainment that went along with "going calling", so I returned to my own inner world.

Just as the clock chimed three, my grandmother and Nell rose deliberately and moved towards the tiny kitchen. "Tea time, at last!" I realized, as I began to visualize the exotic treats that were about to be served. Patience was a virtue, after all.

Nell was putting the kettle on a hot plate when I caught up to them in the kitchen. A silver tea service and a platter of extravagant pastries stood in readiness on the counter. I examined the table more closely and began to speculate where I would be told to sit. I was puzzled. Three of the four chairs were already occupied. Old fashioned dolls, the kind with creamy porcelain faces, full length satin dresses, and lacy petticoats were perched above the chair seats on piles of books, so that their eyes just peered over the table's edge.

I knew all about doll tea parties, and this one was obviously going to be very elegant. Maybe it was time for me to organize another doll tea party at home.

Suddenly, in the midst of my planning, I felt my grandmother's firm hand push me towards the entry way. My leggings and coat were quickly tugged into place, and we were out the door in seconds. A quick good-bye and we out on the street in the shockingly bright sunshine of that autumn Saturday afternoon.

We climbed the hill to my house in silence. As I took off my coat, I rejoiced in the comfort of the sharp, sweet smell that always accompanied my mother's making of celery meat sauce. Later as I struggle to peel off my leggings, I heard my grandmother say to my mother, "Imagine that Nell! Never offered us a cup of tea. All those extravagant sweets and her with practically no money left!" Their conversation continued, but I was already rehearsing the strategy that would persuade my mother to let me use her silver teapot and buy lots of yummy cakes for my next doll's tea party.

### EXERCISE 11



Write a total of five separate five-paragraph essays: 2 narrative, 1 descriptive, and 2 expository. You may write on topics that interest you or you may choose from those suggested in this module.

## **APPENDIX: GUIDELINES FOR REVISING**

Every piece of writing should be revised for content, structure, and style.

### **REVISING FOR CONTENT**

1. Is the content of my essay significant?
2. Is the content accurate?
3. Are there enough details to hold the reader's attention?
4. Are there enough strong supports for my opinion?
5. Have I used lots of specific details?
6. Is the length appropriate for my purpose? For my audience?
7. Is my purpose clearly stated?
8. Is the essay convincing? Interesting?
9. Have I created a strong focus or dominant impression?
10. Are all the details related directly to the topic? (Unity)
11. Is my conclusion satisfying?

### **REVISING FOR STRUCTURE**

1. Have I clearly stated my thesis (main idea)?
2. Is the topic narrow enough?
3. Does the opening "grab" the reader's attention?
4. Is the method of development appropriate, clear, and consistent?
5. Does the essay flow smoothly?
6. Are transitions present?
7. Are enough transitions used to guide the reader? (Between paragraphs? Within paragraphs?)
8. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence? A concluding sentence?
9. Are any parts overemphasized or underemphasized?

### **REVISING FOR STYLE**

1. Have I chosen strong descriptive words?
2. Do I show rather than tell what is happening?
3. Is the language appropriate for the audience?
4. Are my sentences varied in length?
5. Are my sentences varied in structure?

6. Are most sentences in the active voice?
7. Are the verbs strong?
8. Is the word choice fresh and original?
9. Have I used any clichés?
10. Have I used the same word over and over?
11. Have I eliminated all unnecessary words?
12. Is my tone consistent? (Humorous, serious, sad, chatty, etc.)
13. Is my point of view consistent?
14. Have I used enough or too much figurative language

#### PROOFREADING FOR MECHANICAL ERRORS

1. Are all punctuation marks used correctly?
2. Are quotations properly punctuated?
3. Is bibliographic information presented correctly?
4. Are all sentences complete?
5. Are verb tenses correct?
6. Are verb tenses consistent?
7. Do subjects and verbs agree in person and number?
8. Are pronoun references accurate? (Antecedents)
9. Are capital letters used correctly?
10. Are all words spelled correctly?

## PRETEST

1. List the six steps of the writing process. Briefly, a sentence or two, explain each step.(18)
2. Write a brief explanation for each of the following terms:(25)
  - a transition
  - b point of view
  - c grabber
  - d blueprint statement
  - e narrative essay
3. Some people have trouble getting an essay started. What suggestions could you give them to make writing the introduction easier? (5)
4. List three choices a writer has to make before actually starting to write.(3)
5. Write the introduction for a five-paragraph essay about a sad event.
6. Write one body paragraph for a five-paragraph descriptive essay about a lake in the middle of winter.
7. Write the conclusion for a five-paragraph expository essay on how to save money.
8. Use the TRAP formula for each of these topics (12)
  - a hiking
  - b the cirrus
  - c friends
  - d fishing
9. Why is it important to write the purpose and the audience at the top of every essay you begin to write? (4)
10. Narrow each of the following topics so it could be easily used to develop a short composition.
  - a. cars

- b. winter
- c. shopping
- d. recreation
- e. food

## ANSWERS TO PRETEST

1.

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Prewriting   | Choosing a topic<br>narrowing the topic<br>generating ideas  |
| Planning     | Organizing ideas<br>Choosing a style of essay<br>a method of development<br>a point of view<br>Creating a plan |
| Drafting     | Write without stopping<br>Leave for a couple of days   |
| Revising     | Adjust for content, structure and style  |
| Proofreading | Correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence errors  |
| Sharing      | Finding a person to read your work<br>Creating a final copy  |

2.

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Transitions   | used to create coherence<br>may be single words, phrases, or paragraphs<br>may be repetition or synonyms<br>placed between paragraphs and within paragraphs  |
| Point of View | voice of the person telling the “story” or presenting the arguments<br>1st singular - tells only what the witness/writer knows<br>uses pronouns I, me, my, etc.<br>makes writing believable and immediate<br>3rd limited - tells only what someone else knows<br>uses pronouns he, she, it, him, her, etc.<br>puts distant between reader and writer<br>3rd omniscient - same as 3rd limited<br>but narrator sees all, knows all<br>3rd anonymous - pronouns generally not used<br>used in expository essays and reports<br>2nd person - the “you approach”<br>used in expository writing and instructions |

- grabber    often first sentence in expository essay  
               used to get audience's attention  
               may be a quotation from an authority, an anecdote, a statistic, an  
               outrageous comment, a question etc.
- Blueprint statement -    often found in first paragraph of expository essay  
                                   presents summary of ideas or major supports
- Narrative essay -        tells story in chronological order  
                                   purpose: to explain human nature or motivation  
                                   uses many specific details, dialogue, develops characters
3. Just write purpose and audience at top and get on with the body of the essay.  
 Later, the content of the introduction may become clearer to you. As well, you  
 can often move the conclusion to the beginning and rework it into a good  
 introduction.
4.        Choices: working title, purpose, audience, method of development, point of  
 view, type of writing, etc.
- 5-8 Answers will vary.
9.        Keeps writer focused  
               Helps writer clarify what needs to be said and how
10. Answers may vary.

## **FEEDBACK PROCESS**

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For feedback, please forward your comments to:

New Brunswick Community College - Woodstock  
100 Broadway Street  
Woodstock, NB  
E7M 5C5  
Attention: Kay Curtis  
Tel.: 506-325-4866 Fax.: 506-328-8426

- \* In case of errors due to typing, spelling, punctuation or any proofreading errors, please use the enclosed page to make the proposed correction using red ink and send it to us.
  
- \* For feedback regarding the following items, please use the form below:
  - insufficient explanations;
  - insufficient examples;
  - ambiguity or wordiness of text;
  - relevancy of the provided examples;
  - others...

| <b>Page number</b> | <b>Nature of the problem</b> | <b>Proposed solution<br/>(include your text if possible)</b> |
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## FEEDBACK PROCESS

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| Page number | Nature of the problem | Proposed solution<br>(include your text if possible) |
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