



2023 Juneteenth Essay Competition Writing Resource

We're all readers before we start writing. Reading helps you be a better writer. The more language you have moving around in your head, the better you can express yourself and understand the expression of others. Watch videos and films about Juneteenth and listen to podcasts, but be sure and read about Juneteenth, too – in books, newspaper articles, magazine articles, blogs, and of course, websites. Just be sure your sources – the places and people the information comes from – are credible and accurate. Ask a librarian for help evaluating sources if you have questions.

Five-Paragraph Essay

For the Juneteenth essay competition, your essay must have at least five paragraphs: an introduction (one paragraph), the body (three paragraphs), and the conclusion (one paragraph). The body of your essay may contain more paragraphs, but keep your word limit in mind.

Most of you have experience with the five-paragraph essay. If you are unclear or want more instruction, check out the resources listed below.

1. Writing a Five-Paragraph Essay from Berkshire Middle School <https://youtu.be/tim9oNx1clU>
2. Writing Ninjas: How to Write a Five-Paragraph Essay <https://youtu.be/5uSJEiNZ1rE>
3. How to Write an Informative Essay from Terrebonne Parish Library https://youtu.be/hS8_J-JhI7Q with an accompanying blog <https://mytpl.org/project/how-to-write-an-informative-five-paragraph-essay/>
4. The Monroe College Guide to Essay Writing <https://monroecollege.libguides.com/c.php?g=589208&p=4072926#s-lg-box-wrapper-19262870>

Note: Numbers 3 and 4 are intended for entry level college students, but spend some time investigating; they go into clear detail about all the elements of essay writing. Ask a family member or mentor for help if you need it. You can also email your questions to the Juneteenth education committee at education@LansingJuneteenthCelebration.org and a committee member will get back with you.

Understanding the Parts of the Essay

Simply put, your essay is like a map that takes your audience on a reading journey. In the introduction you tell your readers where you're taking them. The body paragraphs are where you share the details about your destination with your readers. In the conclusion, you remind your readers where you took them. It may sound a little silly, but that's how simple it is: tell your reader what you're going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them.





Introduction

The introduction is your map; it's where you describe for your readers what you are going to tell them in your essay, where you are going to take them. Your introduction begins with a couple of sentences that build your readers' interests and lead them to your thesis statement, which is usually the last sentence in your introduction.

Your first paragraph – the introduction – presents your thesis and introduces your topic in a few sentences. It is important to capture your reader's interest right away. You can use a quote, an observation, a statement, or a question. Begin with one, clear, simple, to-the-point sentence stating your essay's main idea or argument. Follow that with general statements about the three main supporting points that you present in your essay's body paragraphs. Your introductory paragraph ends with your thesis statement. Remember your introduction sets the limits of your essay for your reader and includes the main points you will use to support your thesis in your body paragraphs.

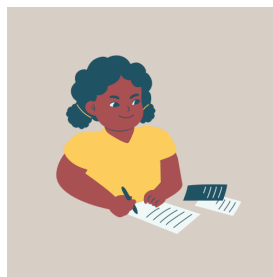
Note: If you have more than three body paragraphs, be sure to represent each paragraph with a main point in your introduction and stay within the word limit for your level.

The Thesis Statement

Your thesis statement is the sentence that tells your readers what they can expect to learn reading your essay – your essay's destination. (Here is another link focused specifically on how to write a thesis for beginners <https://youtu.be/wCzuAMVmIz8> .)

Remember, the thesis

1. Is in the introduction
2. Expresses your main idea
3. Is reinforced in the body paragraphs that follow
4. Is restated in the conclusion



Body Paragraphs

As you develop your essay's outline or structure, remember to use the body paragraphs of your essay to support the main points you presented in your introduction and thesis statement. Develop each point within its own paragraph so each paragraph has one main idea. Support each paragraph's topic sentence with specific details from your own experiences or from what you have discovered in your





research. Appropriate, specific details are the evidence you present in your essay to connect your thesis and topic sentences.

As you are creating topic sentences for your body paragraphs, be sure they connect to the main ideas you put in your introduction. Also, double check that the specific details you share in the body paragraphs support those main ideas, too. Here are links to handouts from two community colleges about structuring an essay:

Five-Paragraph Essay Handout, Piedmont Virginia Community College

https://www.pvcc.edu/sites/default/files/media/five_paragraph_essay.pdf

Outline for a Five-Paragraph Essay, Bucks County Community College

https://www.bucks.edu/media/bcccmecialibrary/pdf/FiveParagraphEssayOutlineJuly08_000.pdf

Transitions

Transitions are words that help people see how your ideas are connected. Transitions often are used to show time shifts (words like *before, later, then*), to show results (*for that reason, therefore, as a result*), or to summarize (*finally, in other words, to sum up*). Use transitions to show relationships between concepts within sentences, to connect sentences within paragraphs, and to show the relationship of body paragraphs to each other. Here is a link to a document of Transition Words and Phrases:

<https://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/transition%20words.pdf>

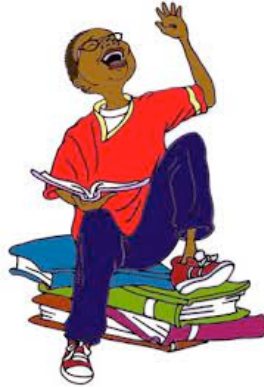
Conclusion

Close your essay by summarizing your main points and restating your thesis – reminding your readers what your purpose was – using slightly different phrasing than you used in your introduction. The conclusion is the place where you remind your reader of the journey you’ve taken them on, where your essay has brought them. It is not the place to introduce new ideas or topics that did not appear earlier in your paper.

Citations

Remember to cite **every** source that you use to create and support your argument and ideas. Any time you use an idea or fact in your essay that you read, heard, or watched, use an in-text citation. Enter the complete source information into a citation generator (like this one <https://www.mybib.com/tools/mla-citation-generator>) to develop your reference list or bibliography. Consider adding the information to the citation generator while you’re doing your research so you do not overlook any of your resources.





Researching Your Topic

The materials provided about the Juneteenth essay competition contain by grade level the questions you will answer in your essay. If you need help finding sources to build support for your point of view, review the relevant part of these videos:

How to Write an Informative Essay from Terrebonne Parish Library https://youtu.be/hS8_J-Jh17Q with an accompanying blog <https://mytpl.org/project/how-to-write-an-informative-five-paragraph-essay/>

The Monroe College Guide to Essay Writing

<https://monroecollege.libguides.com/c.php?g=589208&p=4072926#s-lg-box-wrapper-19262870>

Librarians love helping students do research. Check with a librarian if you need hands-on help.

Brainstorming

Before you start writing, it helps to brainstorm about your topic. Just let the ideas you will use for support come to you in words and phrases. Jot them down without judging them. Take your time. Don't rush. The more words and phrases you come up with early in your process, the more options you will have for supporting details, and the more time you will save when you start writing your essay.

Some people use a spider web design to visualize how brainstormed ideas connect, some use clouds, and some use an outline. Do what works for you. Cluster ideas and details in the way that will make sense to your reader. After you've spent some time looking at your diagram of ideas and support, write a few sentences about your topic. Form the topic sentences for your body paragraphs from the most important ideas from your brainstorming.





Plagiarism

One of the big challenges for writing your essay – or any piece of writing – is making sure you provide credit to the source of the ideas and any actual words you build on or borrow from.

According to the [Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary](#), to plagiarize means

- ✓ to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- ✓ to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- ✓ to commit literary theft
- ✓ to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

Plagiarizing is a serious academic offense. *You cannot let your reader believe that an idea or description represents your thinking if you're repeating someone else's words or presenting an idea like it was your original thought.* That is morally and ethically wrong. It is very important to give credit to the creator of an idea or thought. Develop good habits now so you protect your integrity, the integrity of your writing, and your reputation. People have lost scholarships, their jobs, and the respect of colleagues by failing to credit the originator of material or ideas they have used. Here's how to avoid that:

1. Keep track of the materials you use – your sources (books, articles, websites, film) – on paper or in a specific document on your computer while you are doing your research.
2. Write down all the information you or your reader would need to find that source again:
 - ✓ Author/speaker
 - ✓ Source – publication, newspaper, magazine, book, video, blog, website etc. title
 - ✓ Date, volume, edition, part, version of the source
3. Cite – insert – the source information in your essay right away whenever you use someone else's words or ideas so you don't forget.
4. Use quotation marks (“ ____ ”) whenever you take more than five to seven words directly from a source.
5. Use your own words whenever possible. Here's a helpful blog explaining how to avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing: <https://plagiarism.org/blog/2021/08/06/why-is-it-still-plagiarism-when-i-paraphrase-and-use-my-own-words>
6. Use websites that help you format your references and citations for your bibliography/references page so you don't lose points for improper documentation. Here's one: <https://www.mybib.com/tools/mla-citation-generator>





From the article *What is Plagiarism*, found on [plagiarism.org](https://www.plagiarism.org) (<https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism>)

“All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- ⓧ turning in someone else's work as your own
- ⓧ copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- ⓧ failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- ⓧ giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- ⓧ changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- ⓧ copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)”

Last words of advice on how to avoid plagiarizing: If you can't remember where you got something, don't use it.

Proofreading

Reading your writing to look for issues and mistakes is part of the writing process. Proofreading is how you find the rough spots that make it hard for your reader to understand your writing. When you proofread, you show respect for your reader and for your writing. You want to represent yourself as proud of your work, and it is easier to be proud of work that has been reviewed by you and by someone you trust to eliminate errors before you share it with the world.

Note: Proofreading can earn you points or it can cost you points. In this essay competition, proofreading can make the difference between a win and a loss. Often students lose points in more than one area of the rubric by making simple mistakes they didn't find and correct because they didn't proofread.





How to Proofread

- ✓ Find a quiet place.
- ✓ Read your writing out loud SLOWLY.
- ✓ Listen for errors in verb tense, word choice and repeats, and sentence structure errors (fragments and run-ons).
- ✓ Make corrections as you go.
- ✓ Go back to the sentence (or paragraph) that came before the error, and start reading aloud again.
- ✓ Read your essay aloud to yourself until you do not find any more mistakes – at least two times all the way through.
- ✓ Ask two people you feel comfortable with (parent, mentor, friend, other family member) to proofread your essay for errors and get feedback on any sentences that might not be clear. You must make the changes, not your proofreader.
- ✓ Ask for proofreading help from Capital Area District Library. Go to CADL’s website <https://www.cadl.org/tutor> for more information. You must have a CADL library card.



Remember that these two sources offer complete and thorough process descriptions for writing effective essays:

The Monroe College Guide to Essay Writing:

<https://monroecollege.libguides.com/c.php?g=589208&p=4072926#s-lg-box-wrapper-19262870>

How to Write an Informative Essay: https://youtu.be/hS8_J-JhI7Q

(librarian gives short complete instruction = 15 minutes, discussion of evaluating sources).

Accompanying blog <https://mytpl.org/project/how-to-write-an-informative-five-paragraph-essay/>

For more information about the Juneteenth essay competition or Lansing’s Juneteenth celebration, see the website www.LansingJuneteenthCelebration.org

or contact PEERS (Progressive Empowerment Resource Services) at

education@LansingJuneteenthCelebration.org and a committee member will get back with you.

