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Writing a Five Paragraph Essay

(For further practice in writing an argumentative essay, there is a very useful exercise at the selfaccess.com site. Look also at the worksheet on this site which guides you to write [an argumentative essay about television viewing](#).)

A **five-paragraph essay** has a simple yet very effective structure:

- Paragraph One opens with the main point of the essay: the **THESIS**. This is followed by three sentences that contain supporting points.
- Paragraph Two takes the first of the supporting points and repeats it as a **TOPIC SENTENCE**. This is followed by two or three (or more!) details, examples or pieces of evidence.
- Paragraph Three takes the second of the supporting points and repeats it as a **TOPIC SENTENCE**. This is followed by two or three (or more!) details, examples or pieces of evidence.
- Paragraph Four takes the third of the supporting points and repeats it as a **TOPIC SENTENCE**. This is followed by two or three (or more!) details, examples or pieces of evidence.
- Paragraph Five is the **CONCLUSION**. It restates your topic sentences, preferably in slightly different words. It finishes with a strong sentence that sums up your main point.

Read the essay below. Notice how it follows the pattern described above.

- a. Highlight, or draw a box around, the **THESIS**. Label it.
- b. Label the supporting points **SP1**, **SP2** and **SP3**.
- c. Highlight (with a new colour), or underline (with a new colour) the **TOPIC SENTENCE** in Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4.
- d. Find **the topic sentence that makes the same point as your SP1**. Label it. Then do the same for SP2 and SP3.
- e. What do the other sentences in these paragraphs do?
- f. What does the conclusion do?
- g. Find examples of linking words (*Firstly*, *For example*, *In addition* etc.) in the essay.

Zoos are an unsuitable environment for wild animals and should, therefore, be abolished. Firstly, zoo animals are kept in a very confined area compared with their vast natural habitat. Secondly, breeding programmes are far less successful than zoos claim. Thirdly, zoo animals are exposed to many diseases and other dangers.

Zoo animals are usually kept in very cramped enclosures and do not behave like their wild counterparts. Polar bears, for example, are given about 10 metres of walking space whereas in their Arctic home they roam for many hundreds of kilometres. Similarly, primates, big cats and birds are often confined in cages where they lack exercise and stimulation. Many animals develop unnatural habits such as pacing back and forth or swaying from side to side.

Supporters of zoos argue that they help to conserve endangered species, but in fact they are not very good at this. Even the world famous panda breeding programme has been very costly and unsuccessful. Also, zoo life does not prepare animals for the challenges of life in the wild. For example, two rare lynxes released into the wild in Colorado died from starvation even though the area was full of hares, which are a lynx's natural prey.

The zoo is an unnatural environment that exposes animals to numerous dangers. Diseases often spread between species that would never live together naturally. For example, many Asian elephants have died in US zoos after catching herpes from African elephants. Furthermore, zoo animals are often exposed to chemicals, solvents and other toxic substances. Finally, it is common for visitors to tease and provoke caged animals.

In conclusion, therefore, it is not true to say that zoos are educational or that they help to protect endangered species. In reality, they only teach us how wild animals behave when they are confined in small spaces. Breeding programmes provide zoos with good publicity, but in fact most of them are failures. Finally, zoo animals are probably more at risk of dying from disease or poisoning than their wild counterparts. It is time that we abolished these cruel institutions!

Planning a Five Paragraph Essay

You are going to write an essay on the topic of "*Local Service for Middle School Students at UWCSEA*".

1. Organise the following jumbled sentences to form the first paragraph. Follow the **THESIS + Supporting Points** pattern.

- a. The experience would allow them to get closer to disadvantaged people, understand their needs and help them in some small way.
- b. All students in Middle School should be required to do service for at least one term each year.
- c. Finally, they would probably discover that although service involves some hard work, it is also good fun and leaves one with a sense of achievement.
- d. In addition, the students would have an opportunity to interact with other UWC students whom they would not normally meet back in school.

2. Take the three supporting points and rewrite them slightly so that they can be used as **TOPIC SENTENCES** in Paragraphs 2,

3 and 4. For example, Paragraph 2: *Service with elderly or handicapped people would help UWC students to ...*

3. Now look at the following notes and arrange them under your three topics/paragraphs. (**Beware:** three of the notes are weak ideas and should be thrown out!)

- very rewarding when your partner makes progress, although you have to be very patient (e.g. with a mischievous child)
- a lot of Singaporean schools do community service
- discover that people appreciate your friendship (they enjoy just being with you for a while + chatting)
- during normal school hours, spend nearly all time with own class, but soc. service is attended by

students from a mixture of classes and grades

- disadvantaged people all around us - we should not ignore them
- when you work with a physically disabled person, you start to realise how many obstacles they have to face every day + how courageous & skilful they are
- the principal says that we must do service – otherwise ... get expelled!
- games, music/dance, simple art & crafts etc. involve lots of laughs
- my big brother is in Grade 11 and he has to do service
- bus journey is part of the whole experience - opportunity for relaxed conversation + humour

4. Write Paragraphs 1-4 in your exercise book. **N.B.** When you write Paragraphs 2-4, you must write complete sentences – not just notes! In addition, you should use linking words where appropriate – *Firstly, Also, In addition, For example, Finally* etc.

5. Write a conclusion. Remember that this should restate your main points. However, you should try to change the wording a little. Aim to finish with a strong statement.

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