

## ANNOTATIONS FOR THE '4" ESSAY

### 1. What makes this essay a '4'?

The essay fulfills the basic structural and developmental requirements of an essay. The thesis and topic sentences are clear and direct, providing a main idea and two distinct reasons that show what the structure of the body will be. The body paragraphs contain relevant examples from the writer's personal experience, observations, and/or knowledge. Most examples are discussed in enough detail to illustrate the writer's points. In addition, the writer provides logical transitions from one example to another. Finally, the writer demonstrates some skill with sentence variety. Although the essay contains some errors in sentence structure, spelling, and mechanics, the errors generally do not interfere with the clarity of the writer's thinking.

On the other hand, the essay, while generally acceptable, is not exceptional on any level. The examples and ideas contain no specific insight, nor are they particularly thoughtful or original. Additionally, some parts, particularly in the third paragraph, appear to contradict the thesis, and, while one can figure out the writer's logic, the writer has not succeeded in making his thoughts clear.

### 2. What do you like best about this essay?

The essay is nicely unified, the thesis connecting clearly with the topic sentences. The frequent and sometimes sophisticated use of transitions demonstrates a solid understanding of how to organize supporting material within body paragraphs. Additionally, the writer has made an effort to construct specific examples that clearly support the main ideas. Writers with less skill often resort to examples that are overly generalized, using phrases like "Most people. . .," "As everyone knows. . .," or "A person should always. . . ." On the other hand, this writer draws from "real-life" people, experiences, and situations ("A friend of mine . . .," "I learned . . .," "My mother . . .," and so forth). Finally, the student retains his focus throughout the essay, and even parts that appear to contradict the thesis are clearly related to the topic.

### 3. What could be improved in this essay

Although the essay's organization is basically sound, it is sometimes overly mechanical and lacks development. For example, in the introduction the writer is so focused on the language of the topic description that the sentences become repetitive. Similarly, the topic sentences repeat the thesis in nearly the exact same language, instead of taking the opportunity to refine or further clarify the ideas. Furthermore, the examples in the body paragraphs could be fewer and more completely developed, allowing for additional insight that might clarify the reader's understanding of the specific ways in which the examples support the thesis.

Second, examples in the body paragraphs tend to be wordy and sometimes rambling, making it difficult for readers to stay focused on the main ideas. This is especially true in the second body paragraph, where examples are only vaguely related to the

topic sentence, and the writer does not provide the reader with explanations of how the examples fit into the argument. The writer may have spent too much time developing the first body paragraph, and not had enough time to develop, explain, and revise body paragraph two. Both body paragraphs would be clearer had the writer made more direct connections between topic sentences and supporting materials. Finally, and most important, the incorrect use of language and faulty sentence structure interfere with the clarity of the thoughts the writer is trying to express. Phrases such as “students are expected too much from college professors” force the reader to stop and think about the meaning of the sentence when the writer should be expressing himself clearly.

**4. Evaluate the opening paragraph.**

The introduction is weak. The three sentences fail to develop the ideas specifically. Overall there seems to be no definite strategy for introducing the main ideas beyond stating in the most general sense, the two sides of the argument. However, the writer does fulfill the basic requirements for an introductory paragraph. Aside from the usage error "are expected" in the first sentence and the failure to make "students" in the last part of the thesis plural, the sentences are correctly constructed. Finally, the thesis, while quite long, clearly states the main ideas in the essay, and establishes a foundation for the following paragraphs.

**5. Evaluate the first body paragraph.**

The first body paragraph has a clear topic sentence, though repeating the first part of the thesis almost word for word results in a stiff and simplistic organizational pattern. The paragraph is developed by three examples that illustrate the main idea. Each example is signaled by a transition (“For starters,” “Second,” and “Most importantly”), demonstrating the writer’s awareness of paragraph organization. Furthermore, each example is expanded through the writer’s narration of personal experiences or the specific experiences of others. These “real-life” situations in most instances give readers a clear understanding of the writer’s points.

The initial explanation, however, needs a more specific definition of "challenges" and "problems" and a clearer connection to the topic sentence. The first example is well chosen but needs to be developed with details that would help the reader understand more clearly what the challenges are that college students face. What we see is that his friend didn’t like doing the reading and taking the notes but not that these activities were particularly challenging or that they illustrate how professor’s demand too much of students. The second example is more confusing. The writer states that knowing more than one needs to know “might come in handy for an emergency.” The next sentence promises to give an “instance” of that idea; however, the story of the writer’s mother studying English does not show an emergency situation. Although readers are able to follow most of the writer’s ideas, there is a general lack of detail and a failure to make clear connections between ideas.

Overall, grammatical errors are few. The paragraph has several awkward or faulty sentences, such as “the student wouldn’t have as much problem” and “I learned that in life there is nothing wrong to know more”) that show a lack of skill with language and sentence construction. While these are not major errors, they do interfere with the clarity and flow of the thoughts the writer is trying to express.

#### **6. Evaluate the second body paragraph.**

The topic sentence of paragraph three relates to the thesis, but the sentence is awkwardly structured and lacks a transition from the previous paragraph. The cause-effect relationship of the topic sentence is also not completely logical, since professors “keeping students involved in schoolwork” does not necessarily mean that students will not feel “pressure.” Furthermore the idea of strictness is not clearly defined. It seems as though the writer intends for this to describe the demands made by a particular class or professor, the level of “strictness” being that which allows the student's cousin, in the example, to play and forces the writer to study, but the writer needs to make this connection in the form of an explanation. The writer then goes on to criticize professors as being “bad”, claiming that this condition is common knowledge, and further, that students “hate” professors. Clearly this is different from the generally positive statements made earlier, and causes confusion as to whether teachers are, in fact, “trying their best to prepare students for the challenges that will be faced in the future” as the writer claims in the thesis. The essay’s final point is generalized and the example is both vague in its connection to the main idea and underdeveloped. Overall, the examples are not as focused or as fully-developed as those in paragraph two. Lastly, numerous obvious spelling errors in the last part of the paragraph indicate that the writer has not budgeted enough of his time for careful proofreading.

#### **7. Evaluate the conclusion**

The conclusion, while it lacks any substantial development, does indicate that the writer has some idea of the purpose of a conclusion. There is an attempt to clarify the essay's main idea in the first sentence, and while it amounts primarily to a restatement of the thesis, it does refocus the reader’s attention on the essay’s main point. The second of the three sentences is unclear, though the general idea is one that the writer brought up in the first body paragraph. Ending, as the writer does, with a question, shows that the writer is aware of specific strategies for writing conclusions; however, the sentence fails to raise any questions beyond what has already been asked in the prompt and addressed in the essay, causing the reader to circle back on the ideas rather than extending the discussion beyond the boundaries of the essay.