



Getting Ready For FSA  
Writing in Middle School

# How To Use Your Time

- You will have two hours to write your essay. It sounds like a lot but it will go fast! Follow this timeline and you will be able to finish 😊
  - Read the prompt FIRST- 1-2 minutes
  - Read the articles- 20 to 30 minutes
  - Planning- 10 minutes
  - Introduction Paragraph- 5 minutes
  - Paragraphs 2 through 4- 15 to 20 minutes each
  - Conclusion- 5 minutes
  - Any extra time you are going back to edit and revise to make your writing better. No one should stop editing until the last time warning is given!

# Checking Your Paper

- In order to receive a good score you must have the following in your essay. Study this as it can be a difference between a 10 and a 5!
  - You entire essay must have 5 paragraphs; not four or six, but exactly 5.
  - You must indent 5 times. That means each paragraph has an indent. If you do not indent your score will automatically be a 7. Indent please!!

# Checking Your Paper- Intro Paragraph

- You introduction paragraph must have 3 to 5 sentences. It is important that your introduction contains the following:
  - A hook- One of your sentences must be a hook.
  - A thesis statement (topic sentence)- Your introduction must contain a sentence that summarizes what three topics you will be elaborating on in your essay. Your thesis statement must be ONE SENTENCE! Do not get too detailed with this. You are simply stating your three topics to give the reader an idea of what you will be writing about.
  - Closing- You must have one sentence that wraps up your introduction paragraph. This needs to close the paragraph and wrap up your thoughts. DO NOT TALK TO THE READER! Do not say “read on to find out” or “look below to see my reasons”. That will lower your score faster than anything.

# Checking Your Paper- Topic Paragraphs

- Each topic paragraph must be at least 8 to 10 sentences. If you have less than 8 sentences it means you do not have enough detail in your paragraph or you are missing a requirement. Each topic paragraph must contain the following:
  - Transition word or phrase- Each paragraph needs at least one to two transitional words or phrases.
  - T Sentence- You must have a topic sentence in EACH paragraph. This is like a thesis statement; however it is introducing the topic you will be elaborating on in that paragraph. Your topic sentence needs to be ONE sentence.

# Checking Your Paper- Topic Paragraphs

- 3 to 4 sentences about A- Each paragraph must contain at least 3 to 4 sentences about you're a topic. Look back at your planning sheet for your A topic.
- 3 to 4 sentences about B- Each paragraph must contain at least 3 to 4 sentences about your B topic.
- Quote- Each paragraph must contain at least one quote from the text.
- Paraphrase- Each paragraph must contain at least one paraphrase. THIS IS NOT THE SAME AS A QUOTE!
- W sentence- You need a wrap up sentence in EACH of your topic paragraphs. Remember that a wrap up sentences closes the paragraph and wraps up your ideas and thoughts.
- Own Thoughts and Ideas- Be careful! Each paragraph must contain your own thoughts and ideas, but do not turn it into an opinion piece. No ranting!
- 2-3 EBT- Each paragraphs must contain at least 2 to 3 places where you use evidence based terminology.

# Checking Your Paper- Conclusion

- You MUST get to your conclusion. Without a conclusion you will not be able to get a high score. When you hear the 10 minute time warning wrap up writing the sentence you are on and go straight to the conclusion to write. This is very important!! Your conclusion must contain the following:
  - Summary- Give an overview of the topic you have been writing about
  - 3 Topics- Restate your 3 topics
  - End it by conveying your thoughts or feelings about the topic.
  - I would make sure your conclusion is at least 3 to 4 sentences.

# These Are A Must!

- You have to use transitions between paragraphs and they cannot be the same transitional words or phrases. USE DIFFERENT TRANSITIONS!
- Evidence must come from the text and not your personal knowledge. Do not tell me about something that is not in the text!
- READ THE PROMPT FIRST!- Your prompt will be in the middle. Read it first so you have a purpose for reading.
- You must use all 3 pages of writing in order to get a good score. If you only use half that means your score is only going to be half.

# Evidence and Elaboration

- In order to score higher than a 2 in evidence and elaboration you must put in your own thoughts and ideas. Here are some ways you can elaborate on the evidence you cite in your writing:
  - Summarize the support
  - Discuss why you included this as support
  - Elaborate how it supports the topic
  - Do you agree or disagree with the evidence? (Be careful that this does not turn into a opinion writing piece when you use this type of elaboration)

# How To Begin

- After reading your prompt and setting a purpose for your writing you are going to start reading the articles. Make sure you use your time wisely. Here are some strategies to use to cut down on the time and still get the information you need.
- Underline the topics you see present in the articles that you want to use as your three topics in your writing. Label them T1, T2, and T3 so you know those will become your topic paragraphs.
- Find your A and B when reading as well for each of your topics. Underline and label them. For example your A for Topic 1 could be labeled T1-A.
- These strategies will cut down on your planning time as it is just a matter of going through your underlined points and organizing them onto your planning sheet.

# You Must Plan!

- YOU MUST PLAN! Without planning you are in danger of getting off topic and not having your writing organized in a way that is easy for the reader to follow.
- I promise it will help you if you complete a planning sheet!

# Planning Sheet

- Use the following outline when writing an informational essay:

I- introductory paragraph

T1- topic one

a. detail of topic one

b. detail of topic one

T2- topic two

a. detail of topic two

b. detail of topic two

T3- topic three

a. detail of topic three

b. detail of topic three

C- closing paragraph

# How To Write A Topic Sentence (Thesis Statement)

- The topic sentence (thesis statement) in your introduction paragraph is the main idea of the overall writing piece. The purpose of the topic sentence is to make clear to your reader what you are writing about.
- The topic sentence (thesis statement) should be stated in the introduction and restated in the conclusion. Look at the example below:
  - Anne Sullivan persevered by overcoming her rough childhood, her own physical limitation, and the challenges of teaching Helen Keller.

# Developing the Topic

- Make sure when you are developing your topic paragraphs you include as much as you can of the following:
  - Relevant facts/concrete details
  - Definitions
  - Quotations
  - Paraphrases
  - Examples
  - Remember each topic paragraph must have quotations, paraphrases, and your own thoughts and ideas.

# Topic Sentences for 3 Topic Paragraphs

- Topic sentences the body of your essay are the main idea of EACH paragraph.
- For your informational writing piece, the topic sentence of each paragraph should relate directly back to the thesis statement. Look at the examples below:
  - Anne first displayed her persevering drive by not letting her tragic childhood bring her down.
  - Anne had to be sent to the Perkins School because she also had to overcome childhood blindness.
  - As a result of her belief in learning and education, Anne Sullivan herself became a teacher. However, even this exciting opportunity resulted in difficulties.

# Example Topic Paragraph

- Anne first displayed her persevering drive by not letting her tragic childhood bring her down. According to author Olivia Taylor, “Her father was an abusive alcoholic and her mother died when she was very young” (Taylor, Paragraph 2). At the age of ten, Anne and her brother were sent to live at an institution, a place that served poor and needy people. Jimmie, Anne’s brother, died three months later, leaving Anne alone. At the institution Anne was forced to live with people suffering from mental illness (Taylor, Paragraph 3). Despite this unending series of events, Anne refused to accept such a sad life. When a state official visited her she pleaded with him to let her go to school. He granted her request and sent her to the Perkins School for the Blind. This was the moment in which her life began to take a different diction.

# Transitions

- What are transitions?
  - Transitions are words and phrases such as *for example*, *mainly*, and *in addition* that connect ideas in writing.
- What is the purpose of transitions?
  - Transitions connect ideas and make text easier to understand.
- Transitional word and phrases should be throughout your ENTIRE piece of writing. You should have at least 5-8 transitional words and phrases in your essay.

## Transitional Words and Phrases

Compare/ Contrast	also, however, on the other hand, although, in the same way, similarly, another, like, too, but, likewise, unlike, moreover, yet
Cause/ Effect	as a result, consequently, so, because, since, therefore
Time	about, finally, often, after, first, second, soon, then, at last, immediately, thereafter, before, later, until, during, meanwhile, when, eventually, next, while
Place	above, beneath, into, across, beside, near, among, between, next, around, by, over, before, down, behind, under, below
Support	for example, for instance, in fact

# Cite Your Source

- Make sure that anytime you quote or paraphrase from an article you are citing your source. Remember if you got the information from somewhere you **MUST** tell the reader where it came from.
- The main way to cite your source is to introduce the author or title of the passage right before the quote, and then cite the author's last name and which paragraph the quote came from. Look at the example below:
- According to author Olivia Taylor, “Her father was an abusive alcoholic and her mother died when she was very young” (Taylor, Paragraph 2).

# Paraphrase

- Every topic paragraph must contain a paraphrase. A paraphrase is when you take an idea or statement from the text and state it in your own words. You still need to cite your source when you use a paraphrase! Remember if the idea or statement was not yours originally then you need to give credit to the author. Look at the example below:
- At the institution Anne was forced to live with people suffering from mental illness (Taylor, Paragraph 3).

# Evidence Based Terminology (EBT)

- Evidence based terminology refers to phrases you use to let the reader know you have evidence from the text to support your topic. Below are some examples of evidence based terminology:
  - In paragraph five, the author states...
  - For instance...
  - According to page two of the article...
  - Based on the information...
  - This incident provides further proof...
  - The author states...

# Conclusion

- Your conclusion is the final part of your paper and it **MUST** include the following:
  - Give an overview (summary) of the topic
  - Restate 3 topics
  - Thoughts or feelings about topic
  
- Ideas for items to include in the conclusion:
  - Give a final idea or example
  - Ask a questions or give a comment that will keep readers thinking
  - Give a final meaning, importance, or purpose for the paper:  
Why does it matter?

# Example Conclusion Paragraph

- Throughout Anne Sullivan's life she continuously worked hard to overcome her rough childhood, her own physical limitation, and the challenges of teaching Helen Keller. Her impact on the world is best described by James Freeman, "The touch of her hand did more than illuminate the pathway of a clouded mind; it literally emancipated a soul" (Freeman, Paragraph 5). Her determination inspires me to become a better person and reminds us all that we can accomplish anything with hard work and dedication.

# Final Reminders

- Remember to read your prompt FIRST.
- As you are reading find your T1, T2, T3 and label them.
- Follow the timeline we reviewed and you will have enough time to finish.
- When you hear the 10 minute warning finish up whatever sentence you are on and go straight to writing your conclusion paragraph.
- CITE YOUR SOURCES!!