

## How to write the one-paragraph essay:

1. Jot down the main points you want to discuss in your one-paragraph essay, and then decide how you will order those points. You now have an informal outline to guide you. Heuristics! Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?

2. Start your one-paragraph essay with a main idea that clearly states the topic of your essay. It should be the topic and an opinion about the topic. In other words, it should be an opinionated statement. In addition, this first sentence must be provable (maybe in more than one way), and it must be something worth discussing. Finally, make sure your first statement responds to the cue embedded in the question. For example, words like *analyze*, *define*, *describe*, *discuss*, and *explain* tell what logical strategy to use and often set the form your answer will take. Do not confuse them. **Define** means to identify and state the essential traits of something; **explain** means to make a topic as clear as possible by offering reasons, examples, and so on.

3. Once you have provided a main idea, prove that the main idea is plausible. A writer does this with supporting ideas and evidence. Supporting evidence can be of many types, including any or all of the following:

- Physical descriptions
- Stories (narratives)
- Examples
- Comparisons
- Discussion or analysis of cause and effect
- Discussion or analysis of a process
- Definitions
- Division of a group into smaller ones
- Statistical evidence
- Quotations from authorities
- Logical and reasonable arguments

One of the most common and most serious problems in students' writing is inadequate development. You must provide enough specific details and evidence to support fully the point you are making. Ideas are considered underdeveloped when the supporting details are vague and skimpy; weak evidence does not allow the reader to see and understand your general idea.

4. Use transitions to guide your reader through your essay. Words such as first, next, then, however, and finally make it easy for the reader to follow your train of thought.

5. Conclude your one-paragraph essay with an effective closing, something that makes the reader feel that you have finished. It might be one of the following:

- A summary or restatement of the main idea that enlarges upon it
- A conclusion that can be drawn from the proof stated
- The repetition of a key phrase from the beginning of the work
- A particularly effective supporting detail that feels like an ending

Be careful not to say the exact same thing in your concluding sentence that you have said in your topic sentence. The reader needs to feel that you have moved forward in your thinking, reached a deeper understanding or attained a greater insight, rather than gone around in circles.