



The Lantern English Co.  
The Growing Writer

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## **Essay Basics Practice – Syllabus**

**Course Description:** This course will briefly review concepts taught in *Essay Basics* while allowing the student to practice one complete five-paragraph essay each week, in order to gain confidence in essay writing skills before moving on to *Growing the Essay*. This class is for students who have already completed our *Essay Basics* class, or who have experience but need additional practice in writing five-paragraph essays.

### **Course Outline:**

**Week One:** Back to Basics – formatting & thesis

**Week Two:** Start to Finish – introduction & conclusion

**Week Three:** Transitions

**Week Four:** Using Examples

**Week Five:** Order of Importance

**Week Six:** Chronological Order

**Week Seven:** Compare & Contrast

**Week Eight:** Cause & Effect

**Grading Information:** All assignments will be graded using *The Growing Writer* Grading Rubric and will be averaged to receive a final course grade.



## **Essay Basics Practice**

### **Lesson Three: Transitions**

#### **SAMPLE LESSON**

A tricky part of writing essays is knowing how to transition between each paragraph. It is one thing to write individually cohesive paragraphs and quite another thing to know how to connect them into a smooth and logical essay. Over the years, we have run into this challenge time and time again with students, so we feel it is important to dedicate a complete lesson to the concept of transitions between paragraphs.

As taught in our beginner classes and in the first lesson of this class, paragraphs should begin with a topic sentence and end with a concluding sentence. However, when students begin to write essays, we see several common problems occur.

Let us look at one example essay to demonstrate these errors.

#### **ERROR 1: No concluding sentence**

**PROBLEM** – Notice how the three body paragraphs in this essay do not contain concluding sentences. Each body paragraph ends abruptly on a supporting detail. This is not suitable when writing individual paragraphs, and it creates even more of a problem in an essay. The reader is distracted from the main idea of the paragraph and the essay, in addition to being unsure of where the essay is headed in the next paragraph.

#### **EXAMPLE** –

Switzerland is a country of beauty. It is known for many things, such as for being a neutral country, its infamous Swiss army knife, and the fact that its army is very well-trained. However, if I could visit anywhere in the world, I would visit Switzerland because of its many mountains, its astonishing winters, and its incredible opportunities for skiing.

Switzerland has so many mountains. They are truly stunning. The ice-capped mountains of the Alps create a view you can never forget. Plus, with these mountains come many fun outdoor activities and a lot of snow.

Winters in the Swiss Alps are very beautiful. The snow-capped mountains are simply stunning. Plus, there are many activities to do in Switzerland during the long winter, such as cross-country skiing or taking a ski lift up to the top of a mountain.

Skiing is a very common sport in Switzerland. This is one of the many reasons why I want to travel to the Swiss Alps. There are so many places to ski in the mountains that one can not visit all of them in a single year. Skiing is also great as a mode of transportation.

There are a plethora of exciting activities in the Swiss Alps. Although Switzerland is known for many things, it is the mountains and the experiences and activities surrounding the mountains that make me want to visit this country. I look forward to observing the Alps, enjoying the cold winters, and skiing. Switzerland is really the perfect place for me to visit!

## **ERROR 2: Attempt at a transition sentence at the end of each body paragraph**

**PROBLEM** – To solve this lack of concluding sentences, many students attempt to close each body paragraph with a transition sentence. Sometimes, this transition sentence contains the main idea of the current body paragraph as well as the main idea of next body paragraph. Sometimes, the transition sentence jumps abruptly to the idea of the next paragraph. Either way, this type of sentence creates an abrupt ending to the current paragraph and a choppy, confusing transition into what comes next.

Although a transition sentence is considered 'forward thinking' and is often taught in many entry-level essay classes, we find that using the transition sentence at the end of body paragraphs creates more problems than it helps. A transition sentence at the end of the body paragraph does not create a cohesive paragraph, which again goes against fundamental paragraph concepts.

Below, we have underlined the transition sentences, so you can see them clearly. We have also provided a note as to why each underlined sentence isn't suitable for finishing the paragraph. Notice how each transition sentence does not refocus on the topic of the individual paragraph and creates an abrupt ending to what is supposed to be a single, unified thought.

## EXAMPLE –

Switzerland is a country of beauty. It is known for many things, such as for being a neutral country, its infamous Swiss army knife, and the fact that its army is very well-trained. However, if I could visit anywhere in the world, I would visit Switzerland because of its many mountains, its astonishing winters, and its incredible opportunities for skiing.

Switzerland has so many mountains. They are truly stunning. The ice-capped mountains of the Alps create a view you can never forget. Plus, with these mountains come many fun outdoor activities and a lot of snow. All of this snow makes for very beautiful winters. **(why this sentence doesn't work – this paragraph is about the mountains, not the snow or beautiful winters.)**

Winters in the Swiss Alps are very beautiful. The snow-capped mountains are simply stunning. Plus, there are many activities to do in Switzerland during the long winter, such as cross-country skiing or taking a ski lift up to the top of a mountain. Plus, once you get to the top of the mountain, you can enjoy another great sport – downhill skiing! **(why this sentence doesn't work – this paragraph is about the winters in the Swiss Alps, not skiing.)**

Skiing is a very common sport in Switzerland. This is one of the many reasons why I want to travel to the Swiss Alps. There are so many places to ski in the mountains that one can not visit all of them in a single year. Skiing is also great as a mode of transportation. There are so many great things to do in Switzerland. **(why this sentence doesn't work – this paragraph is about skiing, not about the many things to do in Switzerland.)**

There are a plethora of exciting activities in the Swiss Alps. Although Switzerland is known for many things, it is the mountains and the experiences and activities surrounding the mountains that make me want to visit this country. I look forward to observing the Alps, enjoying the cold winters, and skiing. Switzerland is really the perfect place for me to visit!

**ERROR 3: A concluding sentence at the end of each body paragraph but no transitions altogether**

**PROBLEM** – Many students understand that their paragraphs should end with concluding sentences rather than transition sentences. However, individually cohesive paragraphs sandwiched between an introduction and conclusion do not necessarily make for a unified essay.

In the essay below, the student has swapped out transition sentences for concluding sentences, but the essay still lacks cohesion. Although each body paragraph makes sense by itself, the paragraphs do not connect to each other and do not redirect the reader to the thesis statement. We have underlined the concluding sentences below to make them more clear.

**EXAMPLE** –

Switzerland is a country of beauty. It is known for many things, such as for being a neutral country, its infamous Swiss army knife, and the fact that its army is very well-trained. However, if I could visit anywhere in the world, I would visit Switzerland because of its many mountains, its astonishing winters, and its incredible opportunities for skiing.

Switzerland has so many mountains. They are truly stunning. The ice-capped mountains of the Alps create a view you can never forget. Plus, with these mountains come many fun outdoor activities and a lot of snow. Switzerland is the place to go for anyone who loves mountains!

Winters in the Swiss Alps are very beautiful. The snow-capped mountains are simply stunning. Plus, there are many activities to do in Switzerland during the long winter, such as cross-country skiing or taking a ski lift up to the top of a mountain. Truly, Swiss winters are never boring and always beautiful.

Skiing is a very common sport in Switzerland. This is one of the many reasons why I want to travel to the Swiss Alps. There are so many places to ski in the mountains that one can not visit all of them in a single year. Skiing is also great as a mode of transportation. With so many mountains and so much snow, it is no wonder that skiing is so popular in Switzerland.

There are a plethora of exciting activities in the Swiss Alps. Although Switzerland is known for many things, it is the mountains and the experiences and activities surrounding the

mountains that make me want to visit this country. I look forward to observing the Alps, enjoying the cold winters, and skiing. Switzerland is really the perfect place for me to visit!

**CORRECT – A concluding sentence at the end of each body paragraph and a transition at the beginning of the next body paragraph**

A central purpose of essay writing is to show how several ideas connect together and to a thesis statement. In order to accomplish this connection, transitions should be used but are most often successful when used at the beginning of body paragraphs.

Study the example essay again below, and see how the student uses transition sentences at the beginning of each body paragraph to connect to the thesis. In addition, a few other revisions have been made to allow for even stronger paragraphs and better connection.

**EXAMPLE –**

Switzerland is a country of beauty. It is known for many things, such as for being a neutral country, its infamous Swiss army knife, and the fact that its army is very well-trained. However, if I could visit anywhere in the world, I would visit Switzerland because of its many mountains, its astonishing winters, and its incredible opportunities for skiing.

The first reason I would want to visit Switzerland is to see its remarkable mountains. Switzerland has so many mountains, which are truly stunning. The ice-capped mountains of the Alps create a view you can never forget. Plus, with these mountains come many fun outdoor activities and a lot of snow. Switzerland is the place to go for anyone who loves mountains, and I am one of those people!

Although many people do not enjoy winter, this season is another reason why I want to visit Switzerland. In fact, winters in the Swiss Alps are very beautiful. The snow-capped mountains are simply stunning. Plus, there are many activities to do in Switzerland during the long winter, such as cross-country skiing or taking a ski lift up to the top of a mountain. Truly, Swiss winters are never boring and always beautiful.

Finally, Switzerland is atop my travel list because of my love for skiing, which is a very common sport in Switzerland, for obvious reasons. There are so many places to ski in the mountains that one can not visit all of them in a single year. Skiing is also great as a mode of

transportation, meaning I could ski most of the time I was there! Being able to ski in the Swiss Alps would simply be a dream come true.

Evidently, there are a plethora of exciting activities in the Swiss Alps. Although Switzerland is known for many things, it is the mountains and the experiences and activities surrounding the mountains that make me want to visit this country. I look forward to observing the Alps, enjoying the cold winters, and skiing. Switzerland is really the perfect place for me to visit!

**Assignment 3:** Choose one of the prompts below. Then plan and write a five-paragraph essay. **Each paragraph should be a minimum of five sentences long.**

Remember to include an introduction with a hook and clear thesis, body paragraphs with one supporting point each, and a conclusion that leaves an interesting final thought for the reader.

When writing this essay, focus intently on writing cohesive paragraphs with proper concluding sentences in addition to beneficial transition sentences at the start of each paragraph. Remember that transition sentences should be used in order to show connection to the thesis/main idea of the essay.

**Ensure that the essay is formatted properly.** Write your name and the date in the upper left-hand corner. Add a title centered above the essay. Properly format the paragraphs with an indented first line or a full space between each paragraph, and left-align the text. Justified text is optional but not required. Content should be typed in one of the standard fonts, size 12.

**Prompt Choices –**

- Describe a family celebration that has special meaning for you
- Explain why a particular adjective describes you perfectly
- Topic of your choice