

Jump In

Middle School
Composition

2nd
Edition

Sample



Writing with
Sharon Watson

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Note: The above table of contents is for the whole course. This sample consists of the complete chapter “Opinions—You’ve Got Them.”

What have we added to *Jump In, 2nd Edition*?

- Additional lessons on how to write paragraphs and paragraph types, including topic sentences
- A chapter on reports that comes later in the year when students are more sure of themselves
- Two specific methods of compare-and-contrast writing
- Assignment options for new and experienced writers
- Detailed suggested writing schedules
- Specific checklists that teach proofreading for each essay assignment
- A font that will aid dyslexic and other students
- Detailed and specific grading grids in the teacher's guide for each essay assignment to make grading much easier
- An index
- 117 daily lessons, labeled as Skills



Opinions—You’ve Got Them

Skill 1: What do you think?

You express your opinions often. You probably have voiced an opinion on cleaning your room, what book or movie you think your friend would love, which Bible verse is your favorite, or what you want to eat for your next snack. All of those are opinions—and you have them.

An opinion often comes from something you can’t stand or something you love. In other words, you feel strongly about it, one way or another.

Now it’s your turn. Brainstorm by filling in at least five sets of blanks on the next page. Choose topics about which you feel strongly.

My Favorite

My Least Favorite

Color _____

Ice cream flavor _____

Sports team _____

Song _____

Book _____

Car _____

Activity _____

School subject _____

Animal _____

Outfit _____

Store _____

Meal _____

Vacation _____

Game _____

Other: _____

Complete these sentences:

My favorite song is _____.

The worst habit in the world is _____.

Congratulations. You have just written your opinion.

Skill 2: Reasons

You may not have to tell anyone why diving into the shallow end of the pool is a dumb idea, but when you write about it, you'll need strong reasons. And when you write about an opinion you hold, you'll want solid reasons as well. That way, people can understand your position better.

Read the two conversations below. In them, Liam and Olivia are giving their reasons for their opinions. See if you can catch the reasons:

Juan: What about that game last night?

Liam: It stank! They kept missing the rebounds, they couldn't keep a decent zone defense, and Jones was benched in the first quarter with an injury. What a mess!

Mia: So, how is it? How do I look in it?

Olivia: That is *so you!* You look great in that color, and it's the perfect size. Hurry up! I want to try it on, too.

Now it's your turn. Think about a time when you told someone your opinion. Write your opinion and your reasons for your opinion in the space below. Then go to the next page.

OPINION:

REASONS:

1.

2.

3.

In the examples on the previous page, each person gives three reasons for the opinion. Liam mentions the bad rebounding, the lousy zone defense, and an injured player. Olivia says the article of clothing is a good color, the right size, and desirable as a fashion (she wants to try it on, too). Find the reasons given in the conversation below:

CARLOS: I'm going to play baseball with one of the teams in town this summer. What about you?

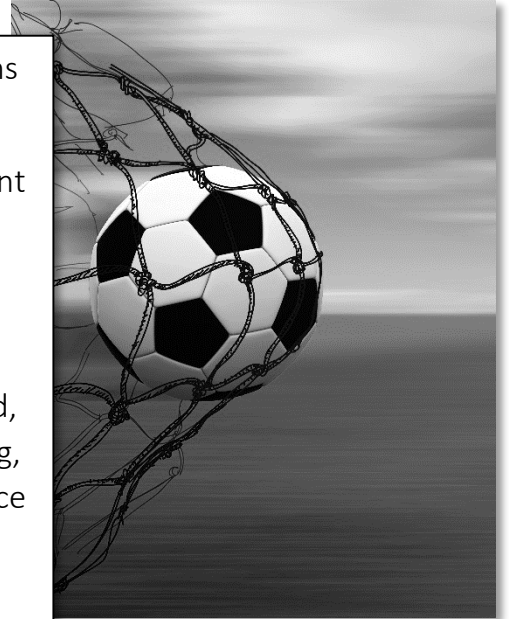
JOHN: Not me. I'm going to concentrate on soccer. I want to play on a professional team someday.

CARLOS: Professional? Oh, right—you broke the league record for goals in a season, didn't you?

JOHN: Yeah. You know, when I'm running down the field, it's almost like I'm flying. When I wake up in the morning, I can't wait to put on my cleats and hit the field. I practice at least four hours a day. It's like I was born to play soccer.

CARLOS: So, what do your parents think about it?

JOHN: Oh, they're all for it. Coach Hamm came to our house last week and talked to them. We figured out a practice schedule. They're all pulling for me.



Now it's your turn. John clearly believes he will make a professional soccer team someday. That is his opinion of his abilities. What are the three reasons that came up in this conversation?

1.

2.

3.

Skill 3: Point order

In any well-written opinion essay, have at least three solid reasons to support your opinion. In addition, you will arrange your reasons in an order that makes sense. There are many ways to do this that will hold the reader's interest. You will learn two in today's skill. Read the examples below:

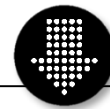
John thinks he can get on a professional team. Why?



Inverted pyramid order

1. **Most important:** He proved his talent by breaking a league record.
2. **Next important:** He loves to play the sport.
3. **Least important:** His coach and parents see his talent and are supporting him.

John thinks he can get on a professional team. Why?



Climactic order

1. **Next important:** He loves to play the sport.
2. **Least important:** His coach and parents see his talent and are supporting him.
3. **But most important:** He proved his talent by breaking a league record.

With the **inverted pyramid order**, you'll begin with your most important reason and end with the least important. With the **climactic order**, you move your most important reason to the bottom of the list, ending with a bang.

Who decides which reason is most important? You will. When you think about the topic, your reasons, and what your readers need to know, you will figure out which is most important and which is least.

Avoid beginning with your least important reason. You will lose your readers right away because it will feel weak to them.

Now it's your turn. You listed a few opinions in Skill 1. Choose one of those now or choose a new one and write it below. Then brainstorm five reasons why you like or don't like that particular thing. Don't pay attention to the most important or least important right now. Just write down your reasons on the next page as they come to you. Remember: write now, fix later.

Opinion:

Reasons:

___1.

___2.

___3.

___4.

___5.

Look back over your list and cross off the two weakest reasons or the reasons you think you might not be able to write much about.

In the blanks next to the remaining three reasons, write MI for your most important reason, NI for your next important reason, and LI for your least important reason.

Select the order in which you want to use your reasons by underlining one of these sets:

Inverted pyramid: most important, next important, least important

Climactic: next important, least important, most important

In the blanks below, rearrange your three reasons in the new order you selected.

1.

2.

3.

Now you have a good skeleton to use for the body of your opinion paper. In Skill 4, you will put some flesh on those bones.

Skill 4: The body

Each reason lives in its own paragraph. Because you're using three reasons, the middle part—the body—of your opinion paper will have at least three paragraphs. The **body** is every paragraph in your paper except the introduction and conclusion.

Each reason also has to have a few supporting statements to make it strong, like pilings under a bridge. The supporting statements are usually facts or examples. Read the following paper “My New Pet” to see how this works. Note the order of the reasons.



Introduction

Body

Reason one
(most important)

Reason two
(next important)

Reason three
(least important)

Conclusion

My New Pet

When my mom said I could have a pet, I went to the pet store to look at all the animals. But what did I want? I listened to the canaries and parakeets singing. I watched fuzzy puppies playing with a ball. But when I came to the kitten cage, I knew what I wanted.

Cats are clean. They constantly lick themselves to remove burrs, dirt, and unpleasant smells. Kittens can be trained to use a kitty litter box, making it easy to clean up after them.

Cats are smart. They cover up their messes. And if you happen to miss a day feeding your cats, it is only a small problem to them. They know how to find mice, moles, small rabbits, and even moths for their meals.

Cats are polite. They quietly walk through the house, minding their own business. As pets, they are not fussy, and they have manners.

I chose a white and butterscotch kitten, and I named her Sundae. She's the cutest thing! She's a fluffy ball of fur. I loved having a kitten so much that I went back the next day and bought Chocolate, her sister. Now I have two pets, and I love them both!

Why does this student like cats? Her three reasons are that they clean, smart, and polite. Notice that all of her reasons turned into topic sentences (what the rest of the paragraph is about).

Now it's your turn. All the reasons for buying a cat have at least two supporting statements. List the two ideas or facts the writer used to prove that cats are clean.

1.

2.

In Skill 3, you chose three reasons for your own opinion. Select one of those reasons now and write a paragraph with supporting statements. Use the space below or another piece of paper.

Reason (which becomes your topic sentence):

Supporting statements for reason (the rest of the paragraph):

Skill 5: Paragraphs and topic sentences

Do you have trouble coming up with ideas to put in your paragraphs? Would you like help organizing a paragraph so it is not a jumbled-up mess?

A paragraph is all about one idea. The **topic sentence** tells readers what that one idea is. The rest of the paragraph explains what you mean, gives examples, or proves why you think your idea is the right one.

Check the chart below as someone develops a paragraph about golden retrievers.

Create Your Own Paragraph

What's your topic? *Golden retrievers*

What's the main idea (the one point you want to make in this paragraph)? *Golden retrievers make perfect companions.*



List three statements, facts, or examples that answer "Why?" or "Prove it!"

1. My golden retriever Dixie loves hanging out with me, whether we are at home or on a hike in a park.

Transition needed? *None needed*

2. When I am feeling lonely, she listens to me.

Transition needed? *Not only do I benefit from a golden's companionship but my friend Nick does, too.*

3. He has autism, and his parents got him a golden retriever named Peanut to help calm him down when his nerves feel all jangled. One day when Nick got angry and started rocking and grunting in a loud room, I saw Peanut come up to him and rub her muzzle against his leg very gently. After a few minutes, Nick reached down and touched Peanut's fur. Then I watched him relax and sit down in the back row with her.

Do you need any transitions like *otherwise, however, in addition, furthermore, afterward, for example, or finally* between your three statements? Write them next to "Transition needed?"

Do you need a sentence at the end of your paragraph to sum up your idea or move readers from this paragraph to the next one? If so, write it here:

Golden retrievers truly have friendly personalities.

This is the paragraph, all written out:

Golden retrievers make perfect companions. My golden retriever Dixie loves hanging out with me, whether we are at home or on a hike in a park. When I am feeling lonely or going through a hard time, she listens to me. Not only do I benefit from a golden's companionship but my friend Nick does, too. Nick is autistic, and his parents got him a golden retriever named Peanut to help calm him down when his nerves feel all jangled. One day when Nick got angry and started rocking and grunting in a loud room, I saw Peanut come up to him and rub her muzzle against his leg very gently. After a few minutes, Nick reached down and touched Peanut's fur. Then I watched him relax and sit down in the back row with her. Golden retrievers truly have the friendly personalities to be ideal companions.

The main idea, "Golden retrievers make perfect companions," becomes the topic sentence, and the rest of the paragraph proves the point.



Paragraphs in the body of your essay need a topic sentence and two or three sentences to explain or prove your topic sentence. These sentences answer "Why?" or "Prove it!"

You can use examples, facts, logical statements, true stories, and so on. In the dog example, the student uses examples of Dixie's actions and one story about his friend's dog.

For your essay, try filling out one chart for each paragraph in the body. Most essays have at least three paragraphs in the body, so use the chart on page 12 as often as you want to.

After you fill out one chart for each of your paragraphs, move the charts around to see which order you want to put your paragraphs in. When you have decided on the order, you are all set to write the body.

Now it's your turn: Choose one of the options below.

1. Do you disagree with the essay about cats? Then fill in the chart on the next page to help you write a paragraph about dogs or another animal.
2. Choose an animal you love or can't stand. Next, brainstorm reasons why this animal would make a great pet (or a terrible one). Then fill out the chart on the next page for one of your points. Finally, use the information you put on the chart to write your own paragraph.
3. In Skill 3, you chose three reasons for your own opinion. Select one of those reasons now and fill out the chart on the next page. Write one paragraph with supporting statements.

Create Your Own Paragraph

What's your topic?

What's the main idea (the one point you want to make in this paragraph)?

List three statements, facts, or examples that answer "Why?" or "Prove it!"

1.

Transition needed?

2.

Transition needed?

3.

Do you need any transitions like *otherwise*, *however*, *in addition*, *furthermore*, *afterward*, *for example*, or *finally* between your three statements? Write them next to "Transition needed?"

Do you need a sentence at the end of your paragraph to sum up your idea or move readers from this paragraph to the next one? If so, write it here:

(You have permission to copy this page as often as needed for constructing your paragraphs.)

Skill 6: Paragraph types and examples

So far, we've been dealing with examples of **direct paragraphs**. A direct paragraph is one in which you write a declarative sentence as the topic sentence at the beginning, like the golden retriever paragraph in Skill 5.

Now it's time to get acquainted with a few more types of paragraphs:

- Interrogatory
- Climactic
- Process
- Enumerative

Ready? Let's go.

An **interrogatory paragraph** uses a question as its topic sentence. Everything in the paragraph after that answers the question. Here's an example of an interrogatory paragraph:



How do creatures thrive in hot, dry deserts? Camels store fat in their humps, and Gila Monsters store fat in their tails to use for nutrition when they can't find food. Kangaroo rats and other creatures are nocturnal, meaning they are active at night, and this keeps them from the heat of the day. The blind skink, a legless lizard that resembles a snake, lives underground where it is cooler and sometimes a little moist. Javelinas get their water by eating the pads of the prickly pear cactus, and the Dorcas gazelle in North Africa gets its water from the food it eats. All of these desert dwellers have built-in coping mechanisms to help them deal with the heat and the lack of water.

After the initial question in this interrogatory paragraph, this student uses specific examples of how animals survive in that environment, and she also sums up their secret in the last sentence.

A **climactic paragraph** has a topic sentence at the end of the paragraph. Every sentence, example, and fact in the paragraph builds to the final sentence and proves it, like this opinion paragraph on camping:

We got to the campground late and set up our tent in the dark, which, it turns out, was a big mistake. In the middle of the night, we were invaded by fire ants that bit us and set our skin on fire. We shook out our sleeping bags and then moved the tent. Early the next morning, it rained. One of us brushed our head against the tent roof, and the water began leaking in. Then the rain pooled in our tent and soaked our sleeping bags and clothes.



When we ran to the car to get out of the rain, we found that our food was half eaten and scattered all over the campsite. We had forgotten to put our food in coolers in the car, and raccoons had trashed it. I really hate camping.

It is easy to see in that climactic paragraph how every sentence builds up to and supports the climactic topic sentence at the end.

A **process paragraph** shows the process of how something was made or done. Here's a process paragraph from an essay on how to make a friend:

On the other hand, avoid the following method of making a friend. First, invite her over but forget her name when she gets there. Second, not only forget her name but also act surprised when she gets there because you forgot that she was coming over to hang out. Third, when your mom gets out a pot to make hot chocolate for the both of you, and a cockroach crawls out of the pot, act like nothing ever happened. Remember to smile big when you drink the hot chocolate. And last, if your almost-friend has a twin brother, be sure to ask her, "Are you identical twins?" These steps are sure to succeed in pushing away a potential friend.

It looks as if this student has had experience with her method!

A process paragraph and a process essay will have transition words and phrases like *first*, *next*, *then*, *after you have*, *when you have finished*, and so on to help readers move from one phase to the next.

An **enumerative paragraph** begins with the number of parts and then shows or explains each part. Here's an enumerative paragraph that discusses three specific (and tasty) parts:



I love going to the county fair every summer so I can buy these three treats. The first is cotton candy. I know I can get this other places like a grocery store, but those are little, squished packages. This spun sugar treat at the fair is fluffy and fresh and full of a light fruit flavor like blueberries or strawberries. I love the way it melts on my tongue. The second treat is fried dill pickles. Just thinking about it makes my mouth water. The coating is crispy on the outside, and the inside is bursting with juicy dill pickle flavor. The third treat is funnel cakes. One thing I love about funnel cakes is that I can smell them before I see them. It is a sweet, cakey scent, and it always draws me to the trailer that is making them. A light, fried dough topped with confectioner's sugar—what could be better than that?

In an enumerative paragraph, the topic sentence will have the number of items you are writing about. In the case of this paragraph on county fair food, the number is three. The paragraph will discuss each item separately, using words like *first*, *second*, *third*, and *last*.

Now it's your turn. In Skill 5, you created a paragraph from a chart. Most likely, you wrote a direct paragraph; that is, a paragraph that begins with a declarative sentence. There's nothing wrong with that.

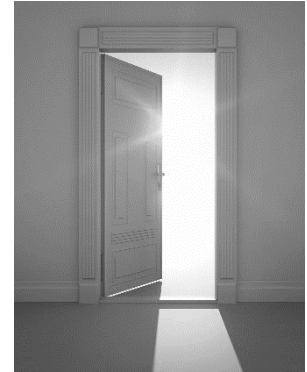
Today you are going to try something new. Using your paragraph from Skill 5, construct a new paragraph. Make it into an interrogatory, climactic, process, or enumerative paragraph.

If you do not like your paragraph from Skill 5 or you have an idea for a new paragraph, write a new one in the form of an interrogatory, climactic, process, or enumerative paragraph.

Skill 7: Introductory paragraph

The **introductory paragraph** is the doorway through which your readers enter your essay.

The first sentence in your introductory paragraph (or introduction) should grab the reader's attention. If soccer-playing John wrote a report on why he thought he could get on a professional team, he would not begin it like this: "This is a report on why I will someday play soccer on a professional team." If he did, you would close the door on the essay or start yawning.



Your job is to grab readers' interest by beginning with something that captures their attention. Use any of the tools here:

An interesting statement: All of my life I've had only one goal—to play soccer on a professional team.

An interesting fact: A professional soccer team has only eleven players on the field. Someday, I'm going to be one of them.

A quotation: "Feet, knees, chest, head—no matter how John handles the ball, he does it right," Coach Hamm told my parents last night.

A question: What does it take to earn a spot on a professional soccer team?

A story: When I was five years old, my dad took me to a sporting goods store. I was drawn to a round ball with interesting black and white geometric shapes all over it. When I asked my dad what it was, he took it out of the box and handed it to me. From the moment the leather hit my skin, I was hooked.

John's opinion is obvious in any of the above examples. Include your opinion somewhere in your introduction, too. Don't keep it a surprise.

On the next page is an example of a thought-provoking quotation in an introductory paragraph.

According to an ad by the oil company Chevron, “It took us 125 years to use the first trillion barrels of oil. We’ll use the next trillion in 30.” We cannot keep using our natural resources at this rate. Clearly, it’s time to conserve them.

The writer’s opinion is the last sentence: “Clearly, it’s time to conserve them [our natural resources].” The student will most likely continue on with a number of natural resources and how to conserve them, finishing with how the reader can be careful with them as well.

Read this example of an introductory paragraph from an opinion paper. In it, a student is giving his opinion of a particular car:

Wind blowing through your hair at 231 miles per hour is an everyday experience for some people. No, I’m not talking about the latest hairdryer or the world’s fastest roller coaster ride or even a Ferrari. I’m talking about the world’s fastest production car, the McLaren F1.

He begins with an interesting statement to capture readers’ attention. Notice that he does not write, “I like the McLaren F1.” He doesn’t have to. You know his opinion of the car by how exciting he makes it sound in his interesting statement.

These three ingredients should be somewhere in your introduction:

- an interesting beginning
- the topic
- your opinion of the topic

If the reader doesn’t know the topic and your opinion of it by the end of the first paragraph, check your “recipe” to see what you left out.

Now it’s your turn. Write an introduction for the opinion you wrote in Skill 1, the topic you used with your paragraph chart in Skill 5, or choose another topic. Use a new piece of paper. Begin your introduction by using any of the five tools listed in this Skill. Make sure the readers know whether you are for or against the topic.

Skill 8: Concluding paragraph

The **conclusion** is the last thing you say to your readers. Give them something intriguing to think about.

Avoid just restating all of your reasons for your opinion in your concluding paragraph (conclusion). That's a snoozer. Tell the reader something of interest about the subject without introducing another point. Again, use an interesting statement, fact, quotation, question, or story you've saved for the end. Here are some examples John could use for his conclusion on being a soccer player:

An interesting statement: It takes a lot of hard work to get on a professional team. It takes a powerful dream, too. And it takes an encouraging support team. I know I'll make it because I've got all three.



An interesting fact: Before you tell me that my professional dreams are ridiculous, remember the famous skier that put our town on the map in the last Olympics. If she can make it from this small town, so can I. And I intend to!

A quotation: At our annual awards dinner, the president of the Mountain City Soccer League said, "I think we have another Lionel Messi on our hands." He was referring to me. I'm not there yet, but I intend to be.

A question: Our town's famous skier received the key to the city at the end of her homecoming parade. When I turn professional and help win the World Cup for the U.S. soccer team, will Mountain City do the same for me?

A story: I dream about the team, the practices, and the hard work it will take to get on a professional team. As a five-year-old boy, I had no idea that my first soccer ball would take me so far. But that little kid dreamed big. And so do I.

Get the picture? On the next page, read how this student concludes his opinion paper on the McLaren F1. He uses interesting statements.

Obviously the McLaren F1 wins the race against the Ferrari 550 Maranello because of its size, weight, and performance. No wonder the McLaren F1 is the world's fastest production car! Next time you want to take a joy ride, choose a McLaren F1—and skip the roller coaster!

Any time you can tie your conclusion to your introduction, you give your reader a satisfying experience. When the writer mentions the roller coaster in the above conclusion, he is tying that paragraph to his introduction.

Tying your conclusion to your introduction is called the **full-circle technique**.

You can tie your conclusion to your introduction by doing any of the following:

- Repeat a key word from the introduction in your conclusion.
- Use a synonym for a word in the introduction in your conclusion.
- If you used a story or fact in your introduction, finish the story or refer to the story or fact in your conclusion.
- Restate your opinion in a new, thought-provoking way.

Now it's your turn. Write a satisfying conclusion to your opinion in the space below or on a separate piece of paper. Use any of the five tools listed on the previous page. When you finish, turn the page.

Here's something interesting: You didn't begin at the top of a blank piece of paper and write to the bottom of it. Look at the process you've already gone through:

Brainstorm. You listed some of your opinions and chose one to work with.

Prewrite. You listed five reasons for the opinion you chose. Then you crossed off two that were weak or that wouldn't work.

Order. You chose an effective order in which to present your reasons.

Write the body. You wrote supporting statements for one of your three reasons. If you were writing this opinion, you would finish the other two paragraphs.

Write the introduction. You thought of an interesting statement, fact, quotation, question, or story with which to begin your introduction. You made sure the reader knew your topic, and you made your opinion known.

Write the conclusion. You thought of an interesting statement, fact, quotation, question, or story to leave with your reader. You filled in more to finish out the paragraph if you needed to. And you tied your conclusion to your introduction in some clever way.

In this case, your actual writing began with the body, but you may begin at the introduction or even the conclusion, if you wish. Some professional writers write their conclusion first because they know how they want their article to end. If you have already chosen an effective order for your points, you can begin writing anywhere in your essay. There's no need to start writing at the beginning.

Don't worry about a main idea or thesis statement yet. We'll get to that eventually.

What's left? To finish this opinion, you would put the introduction, body, and conclusion in the right order. Then you would proofread for obvious mistakes. And you would read your opinion out loud to adjust anything to be as clear as you can be. And last, you would hand a polished paper to your teacher and relax.

Skill 9 has a copy of a real opinion paper. It's about . . . well, you can read it tomorrow and find out.

Skill 9: Evaluate this student's opinion

This opinion is written by a real student. It contains 238 words and a very interesting friend. Read it and answer the questions at the end.

My Friend

Every Friday, I carry my peg-legged friend up the stairs to the door of Mrs. Westfield's small home covered in vines. Don't worry. My friend isn't a pirate. She's a cello.

I found my beloved friend four years ago on an old, white shelf at Mrs. Westfield's home. She dusted her off and told me to take good care of her, for she would be my friend for the rest of my life. I have loved playing the cello from the very beginning.

The cello is known for its deep, rich sound. It is fun to shift up and down the fingerboard. In orchestra, the cello often plays the harmony part. I also like learning about different composers such as Bach and Mozart and reading about famous musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma and Pablo Casals.

Mrs. Westfield makes it so enjoyable; without her I think I would have lost hope by now. She makes learning so much fun by using different, easy techniques. Mrs. Westfield has always been understanding. She doesn't get angry if I make a mistake but encourages me to try again.

The most exciting part of playing the cello is performing. I have enjoyed playing in duets, trios, quartets, music camps, nursing homes, church, and recitals.

I encourage you to play the cello, too, or at least try. Who knows? You may make a life-long friend. I know I'll never part with my peg-legged friend.

Now it's your turn. Answer the following questions.

1. Does she have an interesting first sentence?
2. How does she tie her conclusion to her introduction?

3. In paragraphs four and five, what are her main reasons for liking the cello?

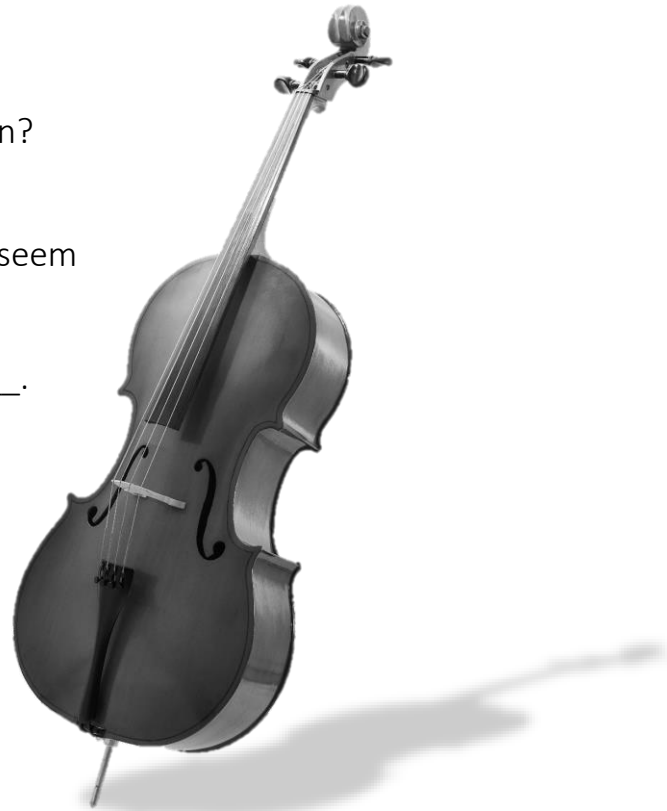
Paragraph 4:

Paragraph 5:

4. How many paragraphs are in her introduction?

5. Fill in the blank: She makes playing the cello seem

_____.



Skill 10: The assignment

CHOOSE ONE:

- Complete and polish the opinion you have been working on. Word count: at least 150 words. Experienced writers: at least 200 words.
- Do you love to write? Can't stand it? Write your opinion of writing. Use at least 150 words. Experienced writers: at least 200 words.
- The writer of "My New Pet" really likes cats. Do you disagree with the writer? Write your opinion of your favorite animal or pet. Or write why you detest cats. Use at least 150 words. Experienced writers: at least 200 words.
- Look at the favorite/least-favorite lists you filled out in Skill 1. Choose one of those topics and write your opinion about it in at least 150 words. Experienced writers: at least 200 words.
- Your choice. Choose something that you love or can't stand (something you feel strongly about) and write why you hold that opinion. Use at least 150 words. Experienced writers: at least 200 words.



A suggested writing schedule:

Check off each day's task as you complete it:

- Day 1: Brainstorm opinions you hold. Choose one of them and brainstorm possible reasons for it. Decide on your three strongest ones and an order in which to put them.
- Days 2-3: Write the body (the three paragraphs that include your three reasons).
- Day 4: Write the introduction and conclusion.
- Day 5: Combine the intro, body, and conclusion. Proofread and revise with the checklist on the next page. Make a neat copy, double-spaced, either by hand or on a computer. Hand it in.

News Flash: For every one hundred words you are assigned, it's going to take at least one hour of thinking and writing. So for a one-hundred-fifty-word essay, you'll need **at least** one-and-a-half hours. Leave yourself plenty of time to do each daily task.

Skill 11: Use this checklist

Every time you write a paper, you will also proofread and revise it. You can look for grammar or spelling mistakes, words you left out, and so on, but for now, you are looking only for the items on the list below.

Now it's your turn. Follow the instructions below. Check off the boxes when you have completed your tasks.

Print and Read

- If you wrote your paper on the computer, print it off and read it aloud. If you wrote it by hand, read it out loud. Look for obvious mistakes and then correct them.

Ask Your Essay

Ask your essay the following questions. If the answer to any of the questions is “no,” adjust your essay until you get a “yes.”

- Does my essay have an interesting title?
- Does my opening sentence or paragraph grab the reader’s attention by making an interesting point, stating a fact, using a quotation, telling a story, or asking a thought-provoking question?
- Is my opinion in the introduction clear?
- Does my essay get to the point quickly?
- Does it stick to the point (not go off the topic)?
- Do I have three points or reasons explaining why I hold this opinion?
- Are my points strong and solid?
- Does the progression from one point to the next make sense?
- Is each point in its own paragraph?
- Is there a topic sentence for each point?
- Does each paragraph support its topic sentence well?
- Is my opinion essay easy to read and easy to understand?
- Does my conclusion give the reader something interesting to think about?
- Did I proofread my opinion paper for mistakes and revisions?

Acknowledgements

Cover image of bear: Olga Yarovenko, adobestock.com
Cover design: Sharon Watson
Student with bullhorn: Adam121, adobestock.com
Jumping student: Eric Simard, adobestock.com
Golden retriever: Svetography, adobestock.com
Golden retriever puppies: otsphoto, adobestock.com
Gila monster: fivespots, adobestock.com
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Soccer player: graphicstock.com
Cello: taraso_vl, adobestock.com



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