Academic Essays

A textbook for intermediate-high ESL writing students

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Revise: Descriptive Essay

Exercise: Give feedback

Read the essay Use these questions to give the author advice about how to improve it. Think about the function of each type of paragraph as well as how sources are used to support the main idea of the essay.

1. Does the introduction provide the general information a reader needs in order to understand the topic?
2. Does the introduction end with an effective thesis? Does it match the style of the essay?
3. Do each of the body paragraphs begin with an effective topic sentence?
4. Are the body paragraphs sequenced in a logical order?
5. Look at each body Do the supporting sentences support the topic sentence?
6. Look at each body Are the supporting sentences sequenced in a logical order?
7. Look at each body Is there enough development? Are there more details or examples that would help the reader?
8. Look at each body Does the concluding sentence close the paragraph logically?
9. Does the conclusion paragraph start by restating the thesis?
10. Does the conclusion paragraph have a suggestion, prediction, or opinion at the end?
Nelson Mandela: A World Leader

Through the ages, the rights of black people have been abused. The non-white people, especially in South Africa, have suffered a lot of discrimination because of racial segregation, which is "...the practice of restricting people to certain circumscribed areas of residence or to separate institutions (e.g., schools, churches) and facilities (parks, playgrounds, restaurants, restrooms) on the basis of race or alleged race" ("Racial segregation," 2017, para. 1). People could not comment, work, and even interact with people of different races. Racism spread throughout in all parts of South Africa, and each time it gained more strength due to government support. "By 1950, the government had created an apartheid system to separate the races in South Africa lasting until the early 1990s" ("Racial segregation," 2017, para. 3). Non-white people looked for the way to defend their rights, but they were not heard until Nelson Mandela appeared. Nelson Mandela fought against racial segregation and founded a political and democratic model in South Africa.

Nelson Mandela repeatedly fought against racial segregation. Black people in South Africa were devastated for the racial segregation and suffered because they lacked the rights that white people had. People manifested with "non-violent demonstrations, protests and strikes to political action and eventually to armed resistance" ("Apartheid," 2010, para. 8). Nelson Mandela was a remarkable person because he fought racial discrimination making diverse strikes and protests. Nonetheless, these rebellions did not help him because the government imprisoned him. While he was "sentenced to life imprisonment, Mandela became a powerful symbol of resistance for the rising anti-apartheid movement" ("Youth for Human Rights," n.d., para. 3). After many years in prison he was able to go free and was chosen to represent the country. In May 1994, "Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's first black president, a position he held until 1999."
Nelson Mandela was a revolutionary political leader. Nelson Mandela, seeing so much oppression and injustice, decided to join the "African National Congress (ANC) and actively worked to abolish the apartheid policies of the ruling National Party" ("Nelson Mandela," 2009, para. 4). He made many protests against the discriminatory movement and promoted a political model, for example, he "established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate human rights and political violations committed by both supporters and opponents of apartheid between 1960 and 1994" ("Nelson Mandela," 2009, "Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa," para. 2). However, because of these protests he was imprisoned for 27 years. After negotiations with the governing National Party and other politicians, he could put an end to the unjust policies of the state. This powerful leader left a great legacy "which investigated human rights violations under apartheid, and he introduced housing, education, and economic development initiatives designed to improve the living standards of the country's black population" ("Nelson Mandela," 2017, para. 9).

In summary, Nelson Mandela fought against racial segregation and founded a political and democratic model in South Africa. Mandela was an intelligent person because he used various strategies to fight against discrimination. Mandela was a great leader who risked his life and political career in favor of democracy, freedom, peace, and equality. Mandela was a symbolic leader of the anti-apartheid movement as president of South Africa. Nelson Mandela died in 2013 from a recurring lung infection. Thanks to Mandela's legacy today, black people enjoy the same rights as white people. The world has changed, and we can see people of color in large positions, both political and social. Nelson Mandela will always be remembered in the world.
**Revise: Comparison Essay**

**Exercise: Give feedback**

*Use these questions to give the author advice about how to improve it. Think about the function of each type of paragraph as well as how sources are used to support the main idea of the essay.*

1. Does the introduction provide the general information a reader needs in order to understand the topic?
2. Does the introduction end with an effective thesis? Does it match the style of the essay?
3. Do each of the body paragraphs begin with an effective topic sentence?
4. Are the body paragraphs sequenced in a logical order?
5. Look at each body paragraph. Do the supporting sentences support the topic sentence?
6. Look at each body paragraph. Are the supporting sentences sequenced in a logical order?
7. Look at each body paragraph. Is there enough development? Are there more details or examples that would help the reader?
8. Look at each body paragraph. Does the concluding sentence close the paragraph logically?
9. Does the conclusion paragraph start by restating the thesis?
10. Does the conclusion paragraph have a suggestion, prediction, or opinion at the end?
Hurricanes and Tornadoes

Hurricanes and tornadoes are both natural disasters. They are both swirling storms created by thunderstorms, composed of strong winds, they are composed by strong winds, and they cause a lot of destruction. Their winds can go from 38 mph to 300 mph. Even though hurricanes and tornadoes cause a lot of destruction, they both have a lot of differences such as how they are created, where and how they develop, the consequences of their formation and what happens during and after these natural disasters.

Hurricanes usually form in the Atlantic Ocean above the line of the equator and over ocean waters with temperatures of 80 degrees Fahrenheit. They are also very common in the tropics. They usually form during the summer and the fall. They usually begin as tropical disturbances that turn into a rotating thunderstorm. When they keep gaining more energy, strength, and power, they turn into tropical depressions (with winds of 38 mph) or tropical storms (with winds of 39 mph) until they become a hurricane (winds can go above 119 mph). These storms can cover a stretch of 500 – 600 miles. To keep track of a hurricane's path, speed and strength, these are given names since there can be more than one hurricane at a time. They are also classified into five different categories depending on these characteristics. During a hurricane the air pressure decreases, the wind speed and the rain can increase, and the hurricane's wind can cause storm surges, which causes the level of the water to rise to 15 feet or more. Hurricanes can cause a lot of destruction. They can tear down trees, electrical posts, destroy houses and flood everything.

Tornadoes are very common in North America. They are common from May to June (northern states) and from May to August (southern states). They are also formed during thunderstorms, especially when warm and moist wind from the south meets with cold and dry wind from the north, creating a swirling, funnel shaped cloud, also called a tornado. The wind speed of a tornado can go from 65 to 200 mph.
accompanied by a suction force that can be strong enough to lift things up and throw them around in the air. This destroys anything that is in its path. Tornadoes can cause damage up to 10 miles away. Its winds are so strong they can rip trees from their roots and throw them around the air. They can also drag cars and destroy houses and buildings. Its destructive path is unpredictable because no one knows where it can go. The duration of a tornado can last from 5 to 10 minutes. Tornadoes are also classified into six categories according to their speed.

Both tornadoes and hurricanes are possessors of big destructive forces. They cause a lot of destruction and are created during thunderstorms, but they are both different because they can happen in different parts of the world and at different times of the year. Their physical characteristics and formation are what make them different from each other, but many agree that destruction is the main characteristic that they have in common, making them similar in effects but not in concept. EXERCISE: Check your essay Remember to complete a self-check (see pg. 22) for your essay before you ask someone for feedback. Good luck with your revisions!
Revise: Cause-Effect Essay

Exercise: Give feedback

*Read the essay. Pretend you are the teacher. What would you tell the author? What did the author do well? What can they improve on?*

**Social Media**

What is social media? Social media is the new form to communicate with others in this new era. Many people use social media, but do not know about its bad effects.

The principal negative effect of social media is fake reality and many problems with self-esteem. Many young people do many crazy things only to get a like on their post. Young people and older people post on social media many different social posts only to receive attention.

Now relationships have many troubles with spending time together, and many relationships are in trouble when they are together. People do not know how to make real relationships and this is a real problem. They make new gadgets to make life easier, but we are in this world to experiment, to explore, and to make mistakes. This is the real purpose of having technology: to make progress. We need to use technology to advance and use social media to connect with those around us. We need to use social media to help others, not to watch videos and see entertaining things. We can use social media to
help others if we make tutorials and teach our skills to other people, and everybody has the opportunity to contribute knowledge. Another factor to be affected is marriages. Many couples spend a lot of time on social media and they only chat for a short time. This makes a new problem and this spreads these couples apart and sometimes gives other people the opportunity to enter into this relationship. This division causes many problems in their relationship. Infidelity is more common today because social media posts news articles talking about how infidelity is normal.

People have a huge problem with social media addictions, but we can help people with this issue. If we are good friends and motivate people who are addicted to social media to explore the real world, they don't need to use the social media to be happy. Maybe they can use their phones only for the camera to save a good memory. It is time to use social media to get started to connect countries and end discrimination. It is time to use social media to bring happiness to poor people. Technology and social media make up our era. We must be the users and not the slaves of our devices.

Take time to count how much time you are spending with your family and evaluate how much time you spend on social media.
Answer Key
The Writing Process AK

**Prewriting**

**Exercise: Complete outlines (Answers will vary, examples provided)**

1. Public art can create a sense of community by adding a sense of pride in the city. (topic sentence 1) Visitors are also drawn to the well-known public art in a city because it can become a memorable landmark. (topic sentence 2)
2. Although many people focus on natural talent, skill is far more important because it can both refine natural talent and create new abilities. (thesis) Skill means developing a deeper knowledge through practice, which can turn ordinary talent into something truly remarkable. (topic sentence 1) Additionally, it is possible to acquire a new ability by approaching it from a mentality of skill. (topic sentence 2). Developing a natural talent and improving on an ability that does not come naturally are both benefits of recognizing that skill is more important than pure talent.

**Exercise: Write questions (Answers will vary, examples provided)**

1. Why does architecture influence society? What is unique about Roman architecture? What is special about the Greek architecture? What are specific examples of each?
Do they continue to influence the world now? How did this skill develop?

2. What health effects? How severe are the effects? How does air pollution cause these problems? What regulations should governments make? How will this impact health? What evidence is there that these regulations would make this impact?

3. What is the Great Depression? When did it happen? Where did it happen? Why did it lead to innovation? What innovations came from the Great Depression? Who invented them? How did difficulty lead to invention?
Introduction to Academic Essays AK

**Organization: Introduction Paragraphs**

**Exercise: Evaluate thesis statements (Answers will vary, examples provided)**

1. Prompt: What causes poverty?
   1. Effective
   2. Not effective, incomplete sentence
   3. Not effective, is a consequence, does not introduce any ideas about the cause
   4. Not effective, too detailed
   5. Not effective, announces
   6. Effective

2. Prompt: Does advertising encourage us to buy things we do not need, or does it tell us about new products that may improve our lives?
   1. Not effective, personal I should be more formal and complex
   2. Effective
   3. Not effective, incomplete sentence
   4. Not effective, example of advertising, not a response to the prompt
   5. Effective, but could be improved because it does not clearly show it is an opinion thesis
6. Not effective, announces

**Organization: Conclusion Paragraphs**

**Exercise: Restate a thesis (Answers will vary, examples provided)**

1. The dignity and bravery that Rosa Parks demonstrated during the Civil Rights movement made her an influential leader.
2. Divorce is often caused by financial problems and miscommunication.
3. The education of citizens and storage of commodities are two important ways that governments can prepare for disasters.

**Organization: Example Essay**

**Exercise: Analyze an essay**

1. Yes
2. Yes (Some of the most impactful inventions of the nineteenth century that changed the way we live were the telephone, the bicycle, and plastic)
3. Yes (The telephone was an important invention because it enabled real-time communication with people in another location. Another very important invention from the nineteenth century was the bicycle because it was a unique form of transportation available to anyone. Finally, plastic was a revolutionary invention because it made certain products cheaper, but it also introduced a new attitude into society.)
4. Yes, they match the order of the thesis statement
5. Yes
6. Yes
7. Yes
8. Yes
9. Yes (It is obvious that these three nineteenth-century inventions dramatically changed the way people lived.)
10. Prediction
Using Sources AK

**Quoting**

Exercise: Identify a good quotation

1. D

**Summarizing**

Exercise: Evaluate summaries

A. Ineffective, overly simplified, the original is a claim ("no visit to the city is complete without...")
B. Most effective, the main information is here
C. Effective, this is more of a paraphrase because it includes all of the information and is almost the same length as the original
D. Ineffective, includes some of the same wording (plagiarism)

Exercise: Write a summary

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

**Paraphrasing**
Exercise: Choose the best paraphrase

1. C
2. B
3. B

Exercise: Write a paraphrase

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

Exercise: Write a body paragraph with paraphrases

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

Exercise: Write a quote, summary or paraphrase

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided
Example Essay

Exercise: Analyze an essay

1. Yes
2. Yes (Gail Halvorsen was a selfless man that shared hope and inspired kindness during World War II.)
3. Yes (First, Gail Halvorsen shared hope with people who desperately needed it. Gail Halvorsen was a selfless person that inspired kindness. His copilot and engineer gave him their candy to give away and other pilots decided to help as well.)
4. Yes
5. Yes
6. Yes
7. Yes
8. Yes
9. Yes (His selflessness was inspirational and the hope that he shared was encouraging.)
10. Suggestion

Prewriting
Exercise: Revise thesis statements (Answers will vary, examples provided)

1. Through his example of how to live and become more peaceful and caring, Ghandi became a spiritual leader.
2. Winston Churchill is a well-known figure because of his leadership, his role in World War II, and his legacy.
3. The contributions of Madame Curie to science have cemented her as a significant figure in history.
4. Frida Khalo's influence went beyond her art as it changed the way women were depicted and perceived in Mexico.
5. The life of Simon Bolivar demonstrates how one person can have a powerful impact on society.
6. Vygostky's works in psychology and education continue to have an impact on our understanding of developmental psychology today.

Exercise: Make an outline

1. Gail Halvorsen was a selfless man that shared hope and inspired kindness during World War II. (thesis)
   1. when: after World War II
   2. who: pilot
   3. what: gave candy
   4. why: kindness and hope
2. First, Gail Halvorsen shared hope with people who desperately needed it. (topic sentence 1)
   1. kids afraid
   2. quote "without hope, the soul dies"
   3. quote "Chocolate bars coming from the sky. It all sounds rather dramatic today, but for me it was a special sign. A sign that we Berlin-ers had to survive"
   3. Gail Halvorsen was a selfless person that inspired kindness. (topic sentence 2)
1. wanted to help
2. didn't have much
3. asked others to help too

4. His copilot and engineer gave him their candy to give away and other pilots decided to help as well. (topic sentence 3)
   1. made official by commander
   2. donations from others
   3. inspired many

5. His selflessness was inspirational and the hope that he shared was encouraging. (restated thesis)

**Exercise: Revise the outline (Answers will vary, example provided)**

1. Jose de San Martin's life is an excellent example of using power and leadership skills for good. (thesis)

**Exercise: Revise developing questions**

1. Questions not directly related to the topic sentence: Who was Peyton Manning? What teams did Peyton Manning play on? What successes did Peyton Manning have in his career?

**Revising**

**Exercise: Revise a body paragraph**

1. Answers will vary, no example provided

**Exercise: Check your essay**

1. Answers will vary, no example provided
**Revise: Example Essay**

**Exercise: Give feedback**

1. Answers will vary, no example provided
Exercise: Analyze an essay

1. Yes
2. Yes (While shopping online or shopping in a store are very distinct shopping experiences for consumers, they both stimulate the economy.)
3. Yes (One thing that makes the experience different when you shop online or in a store is the range of options that are available. Another thing that makes the experience different when you shop online or in a store is the way you evaluate the merchandise. What these two shopping experiences share is their ability to stimulate the economy. As both stores stimulate our economic system, we can appreciate their distinct features.)
4. Yes
5. Yes
6. Yes
7. Yes (conclusion needs more development)
8. Yes
9. Yes (The way people shopped has clearly changed since the creation of the Internet, and the way people shop in the future will probably continue to change as new tools and technology are invented.)
10. Prediction
Prewriting

Exercise: Revise thesis statements

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

Exercise: Complete an outline (Answers will vary, examples provided)

1. Both Frank Gehry and Franklin Wright are well-known architects, but their styles, techniques, and use of color and texture are dramatically different.
2. The different approaches of Gehry and Wright to architecture distinguish their work.

Exercise: Evaluate an outline (Answers will vary, examples provided)

1. It is unclear what is being compared.
2. Each thesis/topic sentence needs to clearly show what two things are being compared and what aspect of them will be discussed in the paragraph.

Exercise: Complete an outline

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

Writing

Exercise: Identify a good introduction

1. Best introduction: 2
Revising

Exercise: Revise a body paragraph

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

Exercise: Check your essay

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

Revise: Example Essay

Exercise: Give feedback

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided
Example Essay

Exercise: Analyze an essay

1. Yes
2. Yes (Some of the most obvious physical health effects of obesity include high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and bone diseases.)
3. Yes (Obesity may lead to high blood pressure. Type 2 diabetes is another health concern that may be caused by obesity. Finally, obesity can contribute to a variety of bone and joint diseases.)
4. Yes
5. Yes
6. Yes
7. Yes
8. Yes
9. Yes
10. Yes (In conclusion, obesity brings with it an increased risk for a variety of health problems.)
11. Suggestion

Prewriting
Exercise: Revise thesis statements (Answers will vary, examples provided)

1. Overfishing has three negative effects on our world.
2. Many people experience homelessness as a direct effect of unemployment.
3. There are many surprising benefits and impacts of practicing yoga.
4. One significant issue in the world is the presence of unstable economies, which can have may implications for both individuals and countries.
5. The addictive nature of alcohol can have significant impacts on your life.
6. Free trade laws have many benefits for countries.

Exercise: Complete an outline

1. Some of the causes of depression include: genetics, brain chemistry, and individual circumstances.

Exercise: Choose sources that support a topic sentence

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

Writing

Exercise: Brainstorm background knowledge for an introduction (Answers will vary, examples provided)

1. How do you define a "successful" investment? What type of investment will the essay discuss? How do you invest in people vs resources?
2. What is a stereotype? Are stereotypes always negative? Do stereotypes only impact racial discrimination?
3. What is the author's definition of a "poor" diet? What is the author's definition of "excessive" stress? Are these the main sources of attention problems?

**Exercise: Write a conclusion**

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

**Revising**

**Exercise: Give feedback (Answers will vary, examples provided)**

1. The first sentence is unclear: Effects of what? Grammar sometimes obscures meaning. The summary needs to be introduced and responded to. The paragraph needs stronger transitions.

**Exercise: Check your essay**

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

**Revise: Example Essay**

**Exercise: Give feedback**

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided
Refining Writing AK

Development

Exercise: Ask questions to generate supporting sentences

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

Unity

Exercise: Revise for unity

1. The aftermath of an earthquake is more dangerous than the earthquake itself. When an earthquake occurs, the shaking causes problems with existing buildings and construction (United States Geologic Survey, n.d.). For example, gas lines may break because the ground around them shifts, and broken gas lines are extremely dangerous to people. Gas lines smell terrible when they are broken. Other dangers after an earthquake include landslides and tsunamis. The sudden energy of the earthquake sends either land or water moving, and
anything in the path can be destroyed (USGS, n.d.).
Earthquakes can have more energy than hurricanes.
Tidal waves from tsunamis can swallow entire countries in the Pacific. When compared to the dangers directly associated with the earthquake, we can see that the aftermath is also important to be prepared for.

2. One cause of pollution is huge factories. In the factories we produce thousands and thousands of different things for humanity. The biggest factories are in the food, petroleum, forest, auto, and pharmacy industries. Factories burn coal, petroleum, and wood. Having many factories would not be a problem if they used different energy. The problem is that no matter what kind of combustible material we are talking about, all of them pollute our air. They also are difficult forms of energy to replace so we will have less fuel in the future. Pollution has been a part of earth even millions of years ago but not the amount of contamination that we now observe. The Earth’s ozone layer has started to thin because of the monumental measure of harmful substances in the air. The factories emit into the air harmful chemicals, and every single one of these substances is poisoning the air. Huge factories are in some ways useful for humans but also harmful to the environment and pollute the air.

**Cohesion**

**Exercise: Identify logical order of sentences**

A. 4
B. 1
C. 5
D. 3
E. 2

Exercise: Insert a sentence

1. Everyone experiences stress. **Even though all people have different lives and circumstances, stress is universal because it has so many different causes.** Some of these causes include health, relationships, life changes, and conflicts between your beliefs and your values (“Causes of Stress,” 2018). Regardless of the cause, everyone should understand stress because they will have to know how to handle it.

Exercise: Identify misplaced sentences

1. The skin is one of the most important lines of protection that the human body has against infection. If a germ makes it past the skin, the body has several mechanisms in place to destroy it. For example, the body uses white blood cells to find and destroy germs that enter the body (“Components of the Immune System,” 2015). These mechanisms don’t always work quickly enough to prevent people from becoming sick, but they do begin fighting the bacteria or virus and help people recover. **In order to become infected, either bacteria or viruses have to enter the body. The skin prevents this from happening most of the time, as we encounter thousands—if not millions—of germs every day.** Thus, the skin is one of the best ways to protect the body from germs because it blocks the majority of them.

Exercise: Revise for cohesion (Answers will vary, example provided)

1. The languages spoken in Haiti and the Dominican Republic are one evidence of their distinct cultures. On
one side of the island, they speak French, while on the other side they speak Spanish. The indigenous people of the island originally spoke Taino (Reichard, 2017). France and Spain both established colonies on the island, bringing their languages with them. Due to these new influences, most of the native Taino language was conquered. There are a few words of Taino that remained in Spanish like huracán (tornado) and maíz (corn) (Reichard, 2017). Both sides of the island are certainly distinct because they now have different languages.

**Exercise: Identify connectors**

1. Cause/effect connectors
2. Showing addition connectors
3. Showing contrast connectors
Writing for the TOEFL AK

**Integrated Writing Task**

Exercise: Analyze example responses

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided

**Independent Writing Task**

Exercise: Analyze example responses

1. Answers will vary, no examples provided
Nuts and Bolts AK

Punctuation

Exercise: Revising for listing punctuation

1. Interesting buildings on BYU campus include: the Wilkinson Center, the Museum of Art, and the Fine Arts Center. (missing a verb before the semicolon)
2. The expensive, red sportscar was parked illegally. (missing comma)
3. No error

Exercise: Revise linking punctuation

1. No error
2. BYU has lots of fun activities for students; you will never be bored on the weekends. (semicolon) BYU has lots of fun activities for students, so you will never be bored on the weekends. (conjunction added)
3. Amazon is one of the most popular websites for online shopping, and you can find a wide variety of products that ship quickly to your home. (comma) Amazon is one of the most popular websites for online shopping; you can find a wide variety of products that ship quickly to your home. (no conjunction)
4. Electricity was one of the most important inventions in the nineteenth century, and it led to other important inventions. (comma)
5. No error

**Exercise: Revise run-on sentences**

1. Parents do not control what their children do. Children’s behavior is affected more by television, movies, and other influences from outside the home. This is a terrible thing that sociologists have noticed, but fortunately, parents are still interested in trying to teach their children. Parents should teach their children about good behaviors, and they will see improvements in the behavior of their children.

**Using Academic Vocabulary**

**Exercise: Identify word forms**

1. development, develop, developmental/developing/developed
2. support, supportive, supportively
3. sustain, sustainable
4. explanation, explain
5. sequence, sequence, sequential
6. partial, partially
7. expectation, expected/expecting, expectedly

**Exercise: Revise for word form errors**

1. The homework assignment looked easy, but I did not know how to COMPLETE it. I asked my study buddy to help me because he is so INTELLIGENT. Apparent, he is really good at learning languages, because he is learning three languages at BYU. I know one day he will be FAMOUS. I RESPECT him a lot.
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