

# Essay Express™



Strategies for Successful Essay Writing

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## Educator's Guide

*Part of the BrainCogs®  
Cognitive Strategy System*



*Pathways to Success for all Learners*



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# Essay Express

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## Welcome to *Essay Express!*

Essay Express brings a wealth of expertise to help learners faced with essay writing. Both the software and Educator's Guide grew out of a collaboration among Ph.D.s, psychologists, certified educational therapists, special educators, and experienced storytellers—all ready to work with your students.

Created by Emmy Award-Winning **FableVision** and **The Research Institute for Learning and Development** (ResearchILD), this software marries the very best in clinical and classroom field-testing, research-based education, engaging media, and computer technology. The media rich environment makes it easier for students to **master the techniques they need to successfully navigate any knowledge-based short essay test.**

Essay Express™ is an educational tool designed for both mainstream and learning-challenged students, empowering all learners to succeed.

## A Message from the Publisher

Welcome to Essay Express™, part of the BrainCogs® Cognitive Strategy System. We are pleased to bring to you another research-based approach from the Institute for Learning & Development and ResearchILD. Dr. Lynn Meltzer, Dr. Bethany Roditi, and their staff teamed up with FableVision to bring the creative BrainCogs thinking to a perennial academic challenge: the essay.

Geared toward the simple paragraph essay, the Essay Express approach lays the groundwork for more complex essay writing in later school years.

We invite you to explore the software and the guide to see how engaging and effective the experience will be for your students. For those of you who are searching for ways of helping ALL of your students succeed, BrainCogs: Essay Express will be a welcomed addition to your educational tool set.

There is much more in store at FableVision as we continue our partnership with wonderful organizations such as The Research Institute for Learning and Development, who make the success of each child their mission. This, too, is our mission: to serve children of all ages.

We wish you many extraordinary chapters ahead.

On behalf of the entire team of FableVisionaries,



Peter H. Reynolds, Founder/CEO



## **A NOTE FROM THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (RESEARCHILD)**

Dear Educators,

We are very excited about making Essay Express™ available to you. This new software is an extension of Brain Cogs® and another creative teaching tool that incorporates our cognitive strategies approach to effective learning. Both of these research-based instructional programs are designed to help students develop life-long strategies for learning, studying, and successful test-taking. Middle school students are enthusiastic about our approach as reflected in this student's reaction:

*"When I first started Brain Cogs®, I thought it was going to be another learning CD-ROM that I would fly through because it was things I already knew. But as soon as the opening movie came on, I knew that this was going to be different and a lot more fun."*

Essay Express focuses specifically on teaching students how to write essays strategically and successfully, especially under test conditions. It's an approach that we've been researching and successfully using with our students at the Institute for Learning and Development for many years.

As researchers, teachers, and clinicians based in Lexington, Massachusetts, we've dreamed of ways of having our message "heard around the world". Our work at Harvard University, Tufts University, and our continual interaction with colleagues across the nation has helped us to develop a wealth of cutting-edge, best-practice tools to help learners of all types, and particularly students with "bumpy learning profiles."

We are determined to share our work with a wider audience and it has become clear to us that technology might be the answer. We have looked for experts in media technology who can understand our mission to help all kinds of learners. The quest has led to this exciting and innovative collaboration with FableVision and the USDOE Star Schools Program.

A special thanks to Susan Taber, M.Ed., for her leadership, creativity, and dedication to this project and for her insightful approach to translating these critical learning strategies from the clinical setting to the classroom. Thanks also to Leta Kniffin, M.Ed. for applying her expertise in multi-sensory, systematic instruction to develop strategic approaches for essay writing. Finally, thanks to the entire Research ILD team: Judith Stein, Ph.D., Joan Steinberg, M.Ed., Kathleen Boyle Caron, Ed.M., Irene Papadopoulos, M.A., Kalyani Krishnan, M.Ed., Cynthia Kingsford, Ed.M, Wendy Stacey, M.Ed., Laura Sales Pollica, M.A., and Dana Lorway, Ed.D.

We hope you and your students enjoy and value Essay Express as much as BrainCogs®. We are eager to hear from you about your experiences with Essay Express.

With best regards,

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## VIEW FROM ABOVE: **WHY ESSAY EXPRESS?**

Essay Express offers a special recipe for essay writing. We've taken the complex and abstract elements of essay writing that seem so difficult to many students and broken them down into concrete components that all students can master.

Unlike speaking, which grows naturally from hearing, writing involves multiple sets of skills. It calls for a sophisticated synthesis of:

- complex rules of grammar and syntax
- knowledge of punctuation
- information organization
- the ability to logically support broad themes with details and elaboration.

This can be a particularly daunting challenge for students with learning difficulties, who frequently face obstacles with one or more of these skills, and often feel overwhelmed during the writing process.

Essay Express gives students a framework to be successful. Using direct, explicit instruction, we begin building competence with base skills, demonstrating the application and purpose of each component. Slowly, we add greater complexity, always spiraling back to the initial concepts. Repetition and reinforcement from lesson extensions (included in this **Educator's Guide**) give students a writing structure and routine they can absorb.

As a teacher, the experience ahead will be extremely rewarding. You're about to see your students become *empowered* to express themselves in written word and to enjoy themselves immensely in the process.

## **Common *LEARNING CHALLENGES* addressed in *Essay Express*:**

- Not knowing what to study for an essay test
- Unsure how to study for an essay test
- Unable to identify what's important in textbooks
- Difficulty understanding an essay question
- Inability to pick out the key words in a question
- Forgetting to answer multi-step questions
- Unsure what kind of answer a teacher is looking for
- Unclear what is meant by "Be specific" or "Give details"
- Difficulty getting started on an essay
- Problems writing a topic sentence
- Trouble organizing information
- Difficulty sticking to the topic
- Struggling with writing a conclusion
- Unsure how to review an essay after it's written
- Anxiety about writing





# STUDENT OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

## Essay Express Benefits

### Students Will Learn:

- what and how to study for an essay test
- how to identify important information in textbooks to use on essay tests
- the meaning of the key words in an essay question
- how to support an answer with specific information
- how to write both a topic sentence and concluding sentence
- how to organize information so it sticks to the topic
- how to review an essay after it's written
- to be more confident in writing and test-taking

Essay Express teaches students how to structure a successful short essay with:

- an introductory topic sentence
- well-organized supporting details
- a strong concluding sentence

The powerful combination of engaging exercises in the software, along with reinforcement from lesson plans included in this guide, help students to become more comfortable with this structure and, by extension, more comfortable expressing their ideas in written form, and in any test situation.

With greater confidence and comfort, students will feel freer to expand their ideas and will readily make the transition to increasingly complex and sophisticated kinds of writing, including the kind of essay writing found on many standardized tests.

## Essay Express Seat Time

The time it takes to experience the entire CD-ROM will depend on the student, and on how you decide to implement Essay Express. On average, it will take a student approximately four to six hours to go through the entire program, if each screen is read and each activity is thoughtfully completed.

It might take longer if you sit with a student as a “coach” during the program. Preferences can be used on shorter pieces over longer periods of time.



## WHAT'S A ROTTEN GREEN PEPPER?

The Rotten Green Peppers, a slightly dysfunctional rock band, were first introduced in the BrainCogs software, where they served as “tour guides.” Their growing professional success in the music world, using the BrainCogs learning strategies, paralleled each student’s growing mastery of learning and studying strategies.

In Essay Express, the band makes a return engagement, facing a new challenge. They’ve been hired to compose songs to help students successfully write essays. One BIG problem: they know NOTHING about writing essays.

Fortunately, with the cognitive coaching of an “expert” narrator, the band soon discovers strategies for writing *any* short essay. After each section of the program is completed, students view an on-screen performance by the band with lyrics reinforcing the content just presented. The full lyrics of these songs are printed in this book.



## BEFORE YOU USE ESSAY EXPRESS: Initial Assessment

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

This exercise will help you to identify the individual writing styles, skills, and strengths of your students and to figure out where each student stands in the writing skills area. It can be done at the beginning of the school year or whenever you begin focused instruction on essay writing. You will be able to identify four writing styles common with young writers.

### RATIONALE:

Each writing style responds to different “help strategies.” Once you identify each student’s style, you’ll be able to tailor your help more individually, smoothing the way to more successful writing. You’ll also know which Essay Express templates are more likely to help which students.

### DIRECTIONS:

Ask your students to write an essay. You can use any topic or the following suggestion: *Explain how music is important in your life.*

As you read through their responses, see if you can identify these four types of writing styles:

- 1. The Easy Writer:** This writer has an innate ability to organize ideas mentally, communicate them effectively, and demonstrates a general facility with words.
- 2. The Repetitive Writer:** Although this writer may appear confident and has no trouble getting started, he/she has trouble coming up with new ways to express ideas. The resulting essay may therefore appear to say the same thing over and over again.
- 3. The Frozen Writer:** Even with adequate study and preparation, this writer becomes paralyzed when it’s time to begin writing. He/she may have lots of ideas but that first sentence is a *huge* obstacle. Roadblocks may grow out of receptive language issues (misinterpreting directions), anxiety about fear of failure, or output issues related to difficulties retrieving or organizing information. This student may even remain frozen until you come to the rescue.
- 4. The Rambling Writer:** Even without preparation, this writer confidently begins writing. Words pour out, but the result is far from fluid. There seems to be little planning, direction, or organization in what results. You may see lots of run-on sentences and spelling errors.

**TIP: You can observe a lot about which students are struggling simply by observing them during the writing process.**

## How can I help assist all writing styles?

**Easy Writers** still benefit from ample encouragement. Tell them what they're doing right, reinforce their skills, make comments on paper that show them how to take material even further and develop a more unique style.

The **Repetitive Writer** and the **Frozen Writer** both need help expanding their horizons. Cueing often helps these students generate ideas. So, make sure they keep the following writing tools nearby:

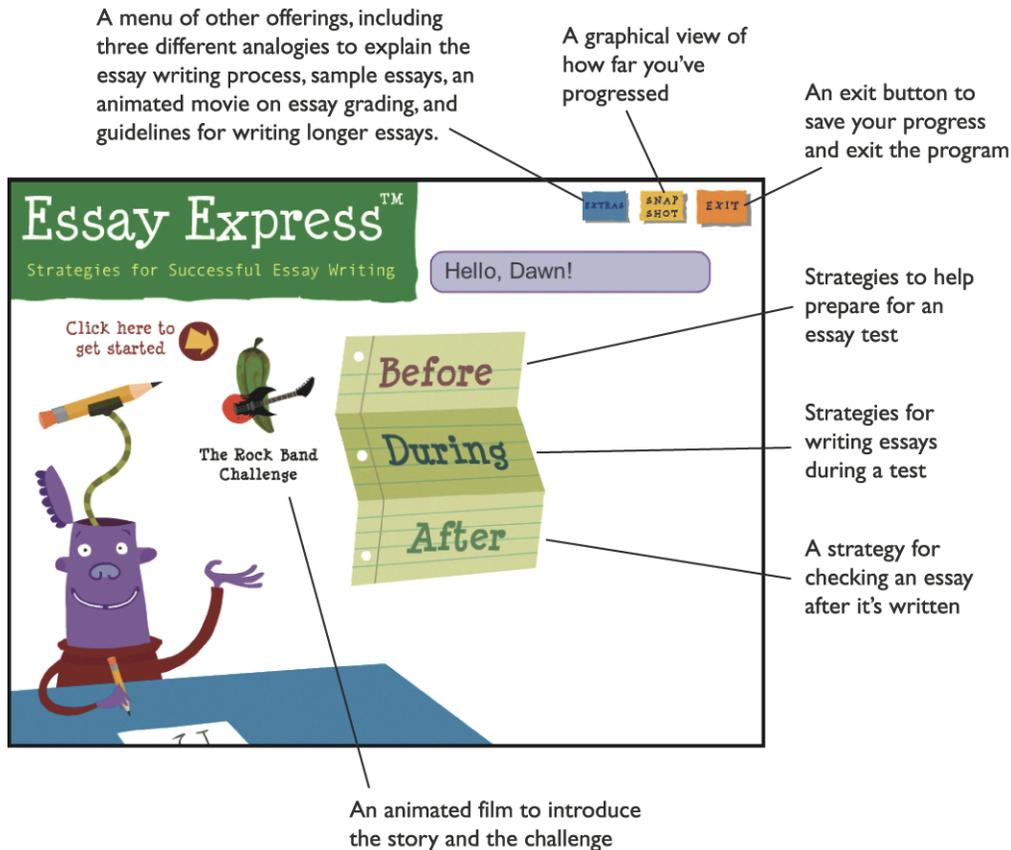
- a list of sentence starters
- a selection of transition or signal words
- a thesaurus (in book form or as part of a word processing program).

The **Rambling Writer** needs to focus on planning and editing. The BOTE template will help this student organize information before writing.

***TIP: The Sketch It Out template found in this guide works well as a generic essay planning tool for all writing styles.***

***TIP: Peer review or teacher-to-student coaching is a useful way to help students identify areas they need to improve on before they begin writing.***

# View from the Inside: Essay Express Details



Essay Express has divided the strategies into three groups — BEFORE the essay, DURING the essay, and AFTER the essay — to make the information more manageable for students. This division helps students feel empowered because it offers strategies that they can use at different points in the writing process.

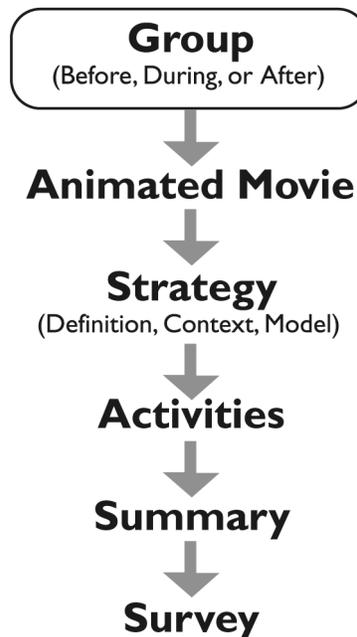
Each of the “BEFORE, DURING, AFTER” strategy groups follows the same progress through definitions, models, activities, and lessons. Each begins with an animated movie and a menu of strategies that students can access in any order. *We recommend students go through the program **in order** because content builds upon and refers to previously presented material. After initial linear completion, many students may find a non-linear review to be useful as well.*



# The Nine Strategies to Use “Before, During, After”

You’ll find nine strategies in Essay Express that help learners before, during, and after the essay writing process.

Anatomy of each  
strategy group:



# Before:

## STRATEGIES TO USE BEFORE AN ESSAY TEST

1. **Clues & Cues:** Actively listening to your teacher to identify important information.
2. **Inspect the Text:** Identifying important information in your textbook.
3. **Unlock Key Words:** Understanding the meaning of words frequently used in essay test questions.
4. **BOTEC:** An acronym to remember the five steps in writing any essay – Brainstorm, Organize, Topic Sentence, Evidence, Conclusion

# During:

## STRATEGIES TO USE DURING AN ESSAY TEST

5. **Question the Questions:** Taking apart an essay question to understand exactly what it's asking.
6. **Sketch It Out:** Planning out your essay before you begin writing.
7. **Make It Dazzle!** Making your essay more unique and memorable.
8. **Tie It Up:** Writing that all-important concluding sentence to end your essay.

# After:

## FINAL STRATEGY TO USE AFTER AN ESSAY TEST

9. **QuEST to do your best:** Checking your essay after it's written.

## EXTRAS MENU

In addition to these powerful strategy tools, you'll find other features including:

- three analogies to explain the essay-writing process (each designed to appeal to a different learning style)
- samples of short essays
- information for expanding Essay Express strategies toward writing five paragraph essays.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A STUDENT COMPLETES A STRATEGY GROUP?

When a student completes all strategies within a strategy group, the software poses a few survey questions modeled on youth magazine quizzes appropriate for middle school. Every possible answer offers useful information although there is clearly one best answer. These questions provide a brief content review in an engaging way.

After each survey segment is completed, the *Rotten Green Peppers* play an original song that also reinforces the content of the completed strategy group.

## HOW TO TRACK STUDENT PROGRESS

The software tracks every student's answers to each activity. This information may help you identify individual areas of strength and weakness. You can access this information through the Administration Tool (see page 8 in the Installation Guide).

The software also stores the cumulative responses to the survey questions so that students can see a final "score" after they've completed all three strategy groups. The final scores fall into one of three ranges:

- **Sizzling Hot Essay Writer: 28-36 points**
- **Just Warming Up Essay Writer: 19-27 points**
- **Room Temperature Essay Writer: 0-18 points**

Students see a paragraph of written feedback designed to point out their strengths while encouraging them to become proficient in more Essay Express strategies.

Students also receive a Certificate of Completion, which they can print out and display. The certificate details the strategies that resonate with each learner.



## Essay Express **BONUS:** The Customizable Notebook Function

We've designed Essay Express to give teachers individualized instructional opportunities so you can align material you're presenting in the classroom with material in the software. We've built in a customizable *Notebook* function that gives you the option to incorporate your own writing assignments at the end of each of the nine strategies. You can customize these assignments for *any* subject or *any* student's skill or grade level.

This notebook is a tool designed to reinforce the lesson extension activities. We highly recommend you go through the lesson extension first and then use the notebook function to help your students practice more activities in correlation to each strategy.

Students will be able to use the notebook function to answer your essay question assignments. They (or you) can print out these responses or save their work as a text file to be opened and revised later in a word processing program.

**EssayExpress Notebook Tool**

CLASS NAME

QUESTION

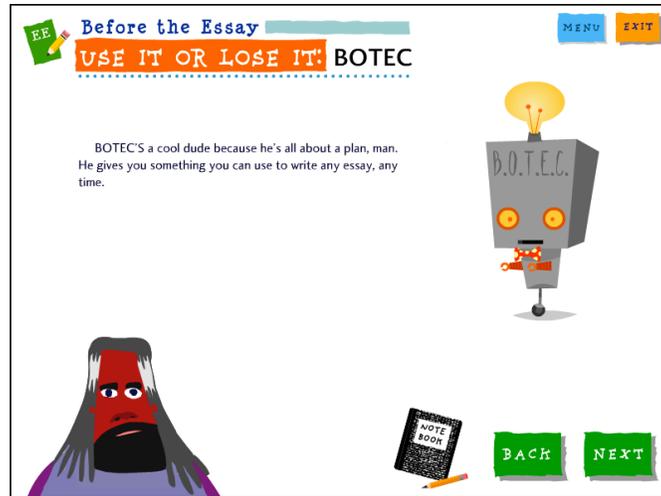
STRATEGY

ANSWER

**NOTE BOOK**

**PRINT** **SAVE TO FILE** **DONE**

In the Administration Tool you can create up to nine questions, one associated with each strategy. You can revise these questions later. You also have the ability to create different sets of questions and assign them to different classes. And while there's a 256-character limit to each question, there is no limit to the length of a student's response.



If you have created a notebook question set, remind your students to keep their eyes open for the **Notebook Icon** on the *Use It Or Lose It* screen at the end of every Essay Express strategy. When they see that icon, it means that you have created a question for them to answer. They simply click on the icon, and answer the question.

When they have finished answering the notebook question, students click “Done” and save their answer so you can view it through the Administration Tool. When students click “Done”, they are taken back to the *Use It Or Lose It* screen they were last using.

See sample activities and questions for the Notebook of Essay Express on page 19.

# Notebook Tips:

Sample activities/questions for the Notebook of **Essay Express**:



Clues and Cues:

- 1) List 3 things I mentioned in our last [subject] lesson on [name a topic].
- 2) Tell me how you knew it was important (HINT: Name the “cue” or “clue”).

Inspect the Text:

- 1) List 3 parts of the [name a specific title] chapter where good information can be found for our next test.
- 2) Using this information, develop 3 short answer questions for our next test. (NOTE: If your question is selected, you will receive a bonus point).

Unlock Key Words:

Choose one:

- 1) **Explain** why this *notebook* is useful.  
OR
- 2) **Describe** how this *notebook* works.

BOTEC:

Compare and contrast your favorite sport or hobby and your least favorite sport or hobby. (HINT: Remember to use **all** of the steps in BOTEC).

Question the Questions:

Name a holiday that you enjoy celebrating, identify when it occurs, describe what happens on that day, and explain why it is one of your favorites. (HINT: Remember to make a **second pass** at this question and **mind map** before answering). (For this example, you will need to assign homework in notebook AFTER students complete the Lesson Extension in Educator Guide p.33)

Sketch It Out:

Identify 3 things you would like to change in your room and home and explain why. (NOTE: If there is nothing to change, give 3 reasons why you are happy with the way things are).

Make It Dazzle!:

Using your *Sketch It Out* paragraph, change the topic sentence to a statement, question, or grabber. Add **at least 2** signal words to the paragraph.

Tie It Up:

Using your *Make It Dazzle!* paragraph, change your concluding sentence. Choose from the following:

- 1) Summarize your main point
- 2) Make a link to the future
- 3) End with a question
- 4) Show the need for change or action
- 5) End with a famous quote

QuEST to do your best:

Make your *Tie It Up* paragraph even better!

(HINTS: Did you answer the question? Did you supply enough evidence? Could you use more signal words? Do you have a strong topic sentence?)



# Essay Express Lesson Extensions

Our goal with the Essay Express program is to introduce students to writing strategies in a fun and engaging way. We also understand that proficient writing takes lots and lots of practice, along with generous individualized guidance from teachers. That's why we have created the lesson extensions that follow.

We want to make it easy for you to bring Essay Express strategies into your classroom. So we've provided explanations, directions, and easily reproducible templates for every lesson. Of course, we encourage you to adapt any of our material to better meet your instructional needs.

## **For Students:**

Lesson extensions will reinforce content and provide more opportunity to practice both strategies and writing.

## **For Teachers:**

You get ready-made, field tested, instructionally-sound lesson plans that extend and reinforce the content of the software through writing challenges, scavenger hunts, and mystery games.

Have fun!





## Lesson Extension: Clues and Cues

**WHEN:** After students complete the *Clues and Cues* strategy.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** The main ideas of the strategy are reinforced and students get the opportunity to apply theoretical ideas to their actual classroom situation.

**RATIONALE:** While the software explains the strategy, students must still figure out which clues they are likely to see in each specific classroom from each specific teacher. This exercise helps them put theory into practice.

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Review the five clues and cues below that are presented on the software. Write them on the board or have students create their own written words that you can hang up.

**Clues and Cues**

- Review sheets and handouts
- Written on board or overhead
- Repetition
- “This is important!”
- Signs of energy and excitement

2. Begin a lesson on any subject by telling your students that each time they see a “clue” or “cue” you want them to yell out the word “CLUE” (or raise their hands).

3. Every time a student identifies a clue, pause in your lesson, reinforce which clue was identified, and link it to the important piece of information presented.

4. Finally, ask a note taker to write the important information on the board.

5. Once your students have mastered recognizing clues and cues, take the list of written clues away so that students can spot the clues without the written aid.

***TIP: Have students create posters of the Human Highlighter with the names of the Clues and Cues presented on the CD-ROM. Display them in your classroom.***



## Lesson Extension: Inspect the Text - Scavenger Hunt

**WHEN:** After students complete the *Inspect the Text* strategy

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** This is a two-part lesson to help students learn to:

- identify the important information in their own textbooks
- use important information to predict short answer essay questions when studying for a test.

We recommend two class periods to complete this lesson.

**RATIONALE:** This extension reinforces the terms and concepts introduced in the software. It also gives students an opportunity to connect both to the specific layouts of their own textbooks.

**TIP:** *This activity works best if you set aside class time to inspect your own text before students read an assigned chapter.*

### **DIRECTIONS: Scavenger Hunt: Period One:**

1. Tell your class they will have a test on (*name day*). Mention that the test will include both (*multiple-choice, true-false, etc.*) questions and (*pick a specific number*) short answer essays.
2. Tell your class: “*To help you practice looking for the kinds of questions I’m going to ask on the test, you’ll need to know where I might take them from. So, I’m going to lead you on a scavenger hunt.*”
3. Break students up into teams of 2—4 depending upon class size. Ask each team to pick a captain and a scribe. To add to the fun, let students pick a team name and list these names on the board.
4. Hand out the *List of Clues for Scavenger Hunt*, one to each team scribe.
5. Tell the class to open to a chapter currently being studied: “*I’ll give each team the next 15 minutes to figure out what part of your textbook chapter matches each clue on the sheet.*”
6. Ask captains to report back to the class by reading their team’s findings regarding the best places to find potential short answer questions.
7. Record each team’s information on the board, all the while reinforcing accurate terms and explaining why each answer is or is not appropriate. Reinforce teams using terms introduced in *Essay Express*. Point out any differences between *Essay Express* terms and those used in their textbook.

**TIP:** *Students may find it helpful if you display these terms up on a board under the title “Memory Jogger”*

*Chapter Title • Headings and Subheadings • Sidebars • Margin Notes •  
Chapter Objectives • Discussion/Summary/Review Questions •*

## **Teacher's Guide to Scavenger Clues: Period One**

<b>Sidebar</b>	I'm really important so don't brush me aside.
<b>Bold words</b>	I'm very bold so don't rush past me.
<b>Headings</b>	If you want to get ahead, it's important that I'm read.
<b>Chapter objectives</b>	What are your goals for reading this chapter?
<b>Captions</b>	I like to lay low. You'll find me under pictures and maps.
<b>Margin notes</b>	I stand alone off to one side with important terms that I don't want to hide.
<b>Summary questions</b>	In the end, I put a spotlight on main ideas.
<b>Discussion/summary questions</b>	I like to question all that you know.
<b>Subheading</b>	Even though I'm not the main attraction, I can give you a clue about what is to follow.
<b>Pictures/illustrations</b>	Although I can take up lots of space, people sometimes skip right by me.

## Scavenger Hunt: Period One Clues

\_\_\_\_\_

I'm really important so don't brush me aside.

\_\_\_\_\_

I'm very bold so don't rush past me.

\_\_\_\_\_

If you want to get ahead, it's important that I'm read.

\_\_\_\_\_

What are your goals for reading this chapter?

\_\_\_\_\_

I like to lay low. You'll find me under pictures and maps.

\_\_\_\_\_

I stand alone off to one side with important terms that I don't want to hide.

\_\_\_\_\_

In the end, I put a spotlight on main ideas.

\_\_\_\_\_

I like to question all that you know.

\_\_\_\_\_

Even though I'm not the main attraction, I can give you a clue about what is to follow.

\_\_\_\_\_

Although I can take up lots of space, people sometimes skip right by me.

## Scavenger Hunt: Period Two

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Ask students to group into the same teams used in Period One.
2. Hand each team the *Scavenger Hunt: Period Two Clues* sheet.
3. Give the teams about five minutes to work on this.
4. Review answers from each group with the entire class.
5. Now, ask each team to make up three potential essay questions using the different parts they discovered in their text.
6. Have one person from each team read the questions they generated to the entire class while you write them on the board under each team's name.
7. **Surprise Ending:** Tell the class you will choose your essay test questions from among those on the board.

**SUGGESTION:** Repeat this activity for **at least 4 weeks** using a variety of textbooks until students are comfortable *Inspecting the Text* to predict short answer essay questions for tests. This will let your students begin to experience their own progress and success! Keeping the same teams will also provide an opportunity for each to see one or more of their questions on a test.

**TIP: Use Scavenger Hunt Period Two as a regular part of every test review.**

## Teacher's Guide to Scavenger Clues: Period Two

<b>Chapter objectives</b>	Before you read the chapter, check these out first.
<b>Discussion/summary questions</b>	After you've finished reading, it's good to answer these to prepare for a test.
<b>Captions</b>	Usually found underneath or alongside an illustration, map, or chart, they add interest to the chapter.
<b>Headings</b>	The leading or most important idea that covers an entire section should help you know what it's all about.
<b>Sidebar</b>	Set apart from the main text, these inserts offer additional, interesting information.
<b>Subheadings</b>	Helps the reader identify the main idea of each specific section and is very supportive.
<b>Pictures/illustrations</b>	Sprinkled throughout the chapter, we show information when words alone aren't enough.
<b>Bold words</b>	These stand out from the paragraph for an important reason.
<b>Margin notes</b>	Small bits of information or terms at the edges of the passage.

***TIP: If you choose, you can track students' test performance over the four weeks to measure their success with *Inspecting the Text*.***

# Scavenger Hunt: Period Two

## Clues

DIRECTIONS: Pull the appropriate term from the Clue Bank below to complete the clues. There will be one term left over.

\_\_\_\_\_

Before you read the chapter, check these out first.

\_\_\_\_\_

After you've finished reading, it's good to answer these to prepare for a test.

\_\_\_\_\_

Usually found underneath or alongside an illustration, map, or chart, they add interest to the chapter.

\_\_\_\_\_

The leading or most important idea that covers an entire section should help you know what it's all about.

\_\_\_\_\_

Set apart from the main text, these inserts offer additional, interesting information.

\_\_\_\_\_

Helps the reader identify the main idea of each specific section and is very supportive.

\_\_\_\_\_

Sprinkled throughout the chapter, we show information when words alone aren't enough.

\_\_\_\_\_

These stand out from the paragraph for an important reason.

\_\_\_\_\_

Small bits of information or terms at the edges of the passage.

## CLUE BANK

Margin notes

Sidebar

Old words

Discussion/summary questions

Captions

Headings

Lesson goals

Subheading

Pictures/illustrations

Chapter objectives



## Lesson Extension: Unlock Key Words

**WHEN:** After students complete *Unlock Key Words*.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Students become more familiar with different kinds of essay test questions. This extension also provides reinforcement for identifying key words and their meanings, and in understanding what a question is asking.

**RATIONALE:** Making didactic information more experiential helps students internalize the concepts introduced in the software. When concepts are internalized, students are more likely to practice them on their own.

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Write the following key words introduced in the software on the board.

**Key Words**

**Compare**

**Contrast**

**State/Identify/Discuss/Explain/Describe (S-I-D-E-D)**

**Summarize**

2. Divide the class into small groups.

3. Open any textbook to a chapter that has already been read by students.

4. Assign each group different parts of the chapter (page numbers, subheadings, sidebars, illustrations, etc.)

5. Ask each group to come up with several potential essay questions using any of the key words above.

6. Have each group share their questions with the class and ask the class to discuss what a *correct* answer to each question should include.

***TIP: When assigning any reading, ask your students to create several essay questions based on the reading. Collect and use them on tests.***



## Lesson Extension: BOTE C Top Down/Bottom Up Thinkers

**NOTE:** People have different ways of thinking.

*Top-Down Thinkers:* Some tend to think globally, conceptually, and abstractly. They usually come up with big ideas first, which can make it easier for them to add, link, and organize details. At the same time, they may need to learn to support their big ideas with details and examples.

*Bottom-Up Thinkers:* They tend to generate lots of details first and may have difficulty grouping and organizing this volume of information into broader themes.

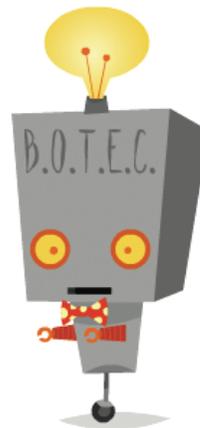
Because thinking style influences writing style, you may find it helpful to identify the thinking styles of your students. It's easy to do.

Create a general question and ask individual students to brainstorm their ideas on paper. Then collect their work.

Students who list lots of details, but fewer global themes, are generally *Bottom-Up Thinkers*. Students who list global themes, but fewer details, are generally *Top-Down Thinkers*.

The BOTE C strategy and template will help both kinds of thinkers. (See next page.)

**B**rainstorm  
**O**rganize  
**T**opic Sentence  
**E**vidence  
**C**onclusion





## Lesson Extension: BOTEC

**WHEN:** After completion of the strategy *BOTEC*.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Students become more familiar with the step-by-step essay writing process outlined in the strategy *BOTEC*.

**RATIONALE:** Using the *BOTEC* template helps to concretize the organizational advantages of planning before writing.

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Duplicate the 2-page *BOTEC* template (pgs. 31-32).
2. Hand each student a copy.
3. Assign a topic and have students use the template to write their essay.

**TIP:** Have copies of the *BOTEC* template readily available in your classroom as a student resource for all kinds of writing assignments.

**Suggested essay topics for BOTEC practice:**

- Describe an experience that requires courage.
- Describe the after-school activities you participate in.
- Explain three traditions in your family.
- Describe the most adventurous moment in your life.
- Discuss a story you enjoyed that had an unexpected ending.
- Name someone who changed history and explain what they did.
- Pick a favorite book or movie and explain why it's important to you.
- What are your three favorite winter activities?
- Explain how you play the game *Hangman*.
- Describe your bedtime routine?
- If you had to make dinner, what would you make and how would you do it?
- What preparations do you make when getting ready to take a trip?
- How do you set a table for dinner?
- Name a favorite activity and describe why you like it.
- What are some good reasons not to smoke?
- What do you like and dislike about long car rides?
- Explain why it is important for us to pay attention to the environment.
- What would make an unusual pet? Explain why?
- If you created your own planet, what kind of food would the inhabitants eat?
- If you ran this school, describe three things you would do differently.

# Brainstorm Organize Topic Sentence Evidence Conclusion BOTEC Template

**Essay Question:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**BRAINSTORM** your ideas here.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**ORGANIZE:** Choose at least 3 ideas from your brainstorm list above that relate best to the essay question:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**TOPIC SENTENCE:** Create a topic sentence that introduces your entire essay.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**EVIDENCE:** List each of your chosen ideas above and add at least one example for each idea:

Idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

Idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

Idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

Idea #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_





## Lesson Extension: Question the Questions

**WHEN:** After students complete the *Question the Questions* strategy. This practice is particularly useful just before students take an essay test.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Students become more familiar with the component parts of *Question the Questions*. They also experience concretely how easy it can be to lose points if they don't understand a question or fully answer it.

**RATIONALE:** A practical illustration emphasizes how important it is to fully understand essay questions before answering.

**DIRECTIONS:** You'll need about 15 minutes.

1. Duplicate and distribute the blank *Question the Questions* template, (see page 35).

2. Put a blank version on the board or on an overhead. Work with your class to fill in the six blanks in the question mark by listing all the steps to *Question the Questions*. Ask your students to complete their own copies along with you.

1. Think about the question. (make a second pass)
2. Picture what the question is asking you to do. (mind map)
3. Say the question aloud. (whisper read)
4. Underline key words. (key words)
5. Number each part of the question. (number parts)
6. Ask for help.

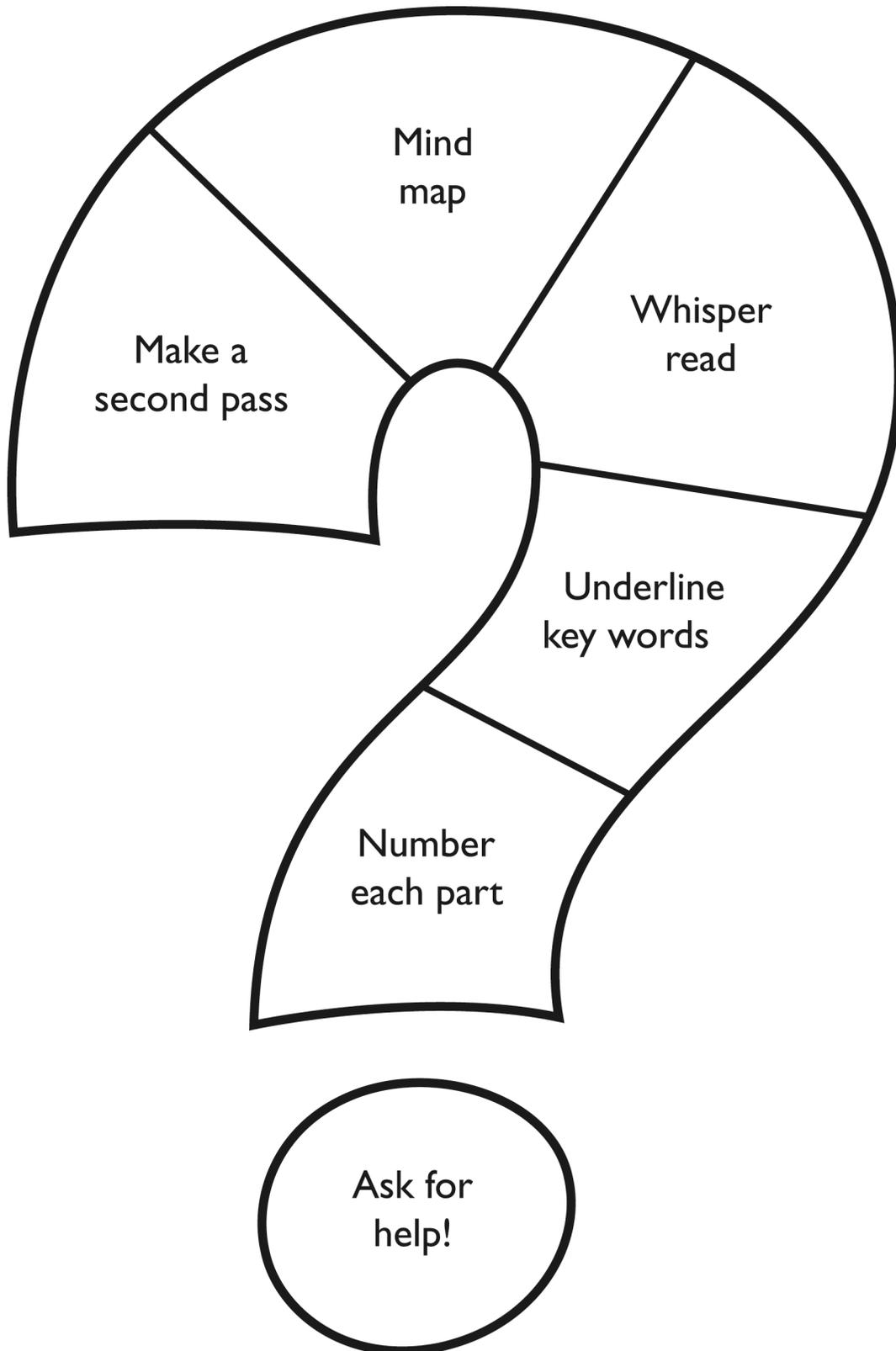
3. For practice, ask your students which strategy components they are using to answer these three questions\*:

1. Discuss how earthquakes are produced, how we can locate where they occur, and how we rate their intensity.
2. While Rome was an expanding empire, the citizens of the empire greatly benefited from the expansion. If you were a citizen living in the city of Rome, identify two reasons why you would have been happy that the empire was expanding. Explain why it was a good thing.
3. Discuss the most important responsibilities of a conductor.

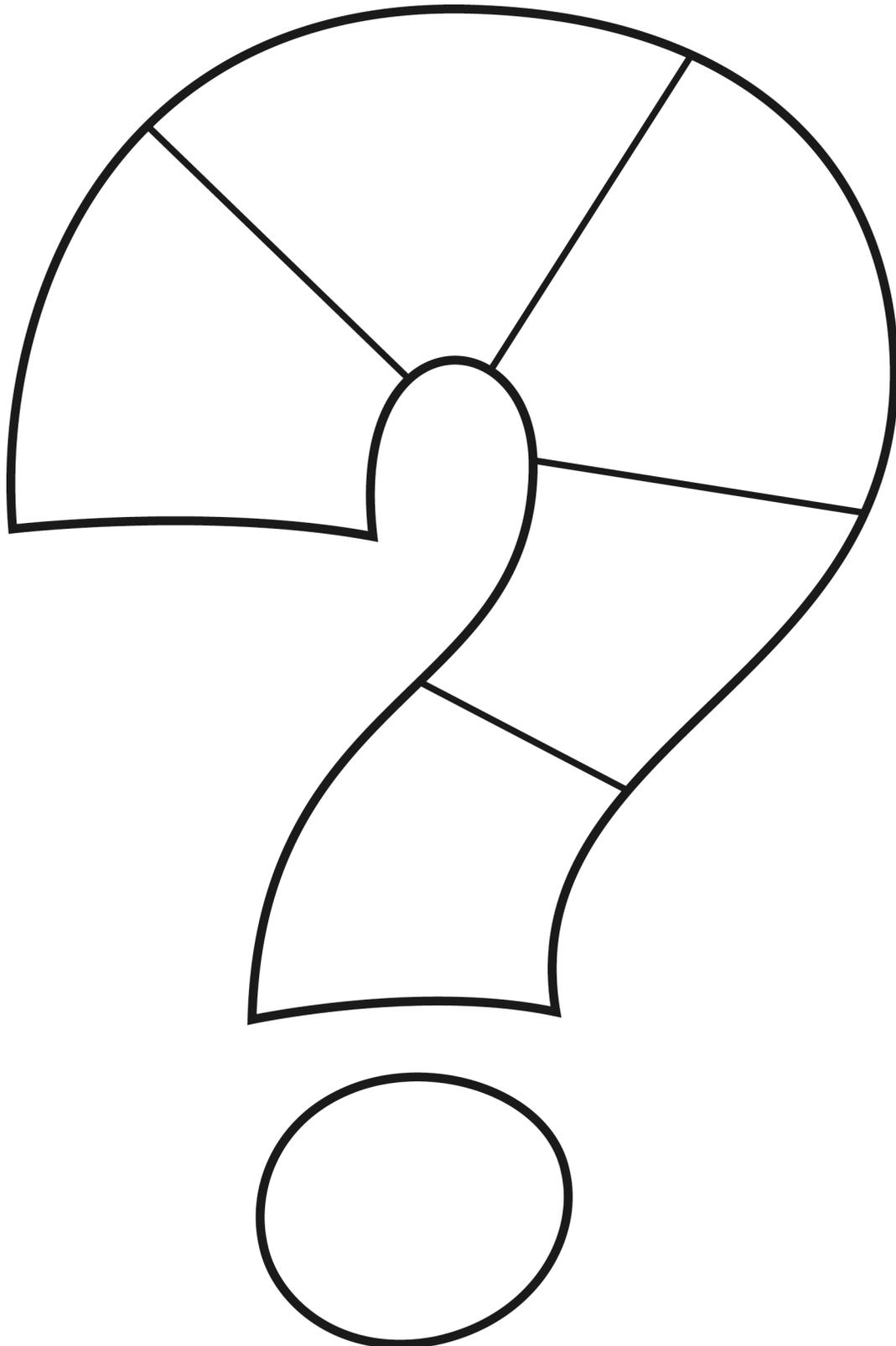
{\*Note: The *first* question focuses on numbering multiple parts. The *second* is intentionally wordy to focus on the need to reread, draw a mind map, or do whisper reading. The *third* question does not contain sufficient context information (the conductor could work either on a train, with an orchestra, or be related to electricity) and therefore requires asking for help.}

**TIP: Tell students that they will receive one bonus point for each question mark they write in the margin next to an essay test question, to show that they are thinking about the six possible strategies for *Question the Questions*.**

# Teacher's Guide to the Question the Questions Template



# Question the Questions Template





## Lesson Extension: Sketch It Out

**WHEN:** After completing the strategy *Sketch It Out*.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Through this scaffolding exercise, students reinforce the key components of essay writing by building skills a little each day.

**RATIONALE:** By building an essay over three days, students concretely experience the distinct building blocks needed to write a successful essay. They also begin to see the value of pre-writing within the writing process.

**DIRECTIONS:** This can work as either a homework assignment or in-class activity. Select an essay question relevant to a current unit of study. Ideally, incorporate one of the *key words* identified in *Unlock Key Words* in your question. Or, you can use this topic: *List and describe ways in which computers are useful.*

**Day One:** Ask each student to write three possible topic sentences to open this essay (one statement, one question, one grabber):

Models:

*Statement:* There are many ways that computers are useful.

*Question:* Have you ever thought of all the ways that computers are useful?

*Grabber:* Life would be awful without computers!

**Day Two:** Ask each student to select one of the topic sentences written for the previous exercise and add three supporting sentences.

Models:

*Topic Sentence:* Life would be awful without computers!

*Supporting Detail #1:* Computers are a great way to find information about a topic for homework or a research paper.

*Supporting Detail #2:* It is easy to use computers to send messages to other people quickly by email or Instant Messaging.

*Supporting Detail #3:* Most kids like the computer for playing fun games, such as *The SIMS*, or even educational games, such as *Oregon Trail*.

**Day Three:** Ask students to complete their essay by writing three possible concluding sentences (one recap, one question, one link to the future).

Models:

*Re-cap:* Having computers has made life easier and more enjoyable for everyone.

*Question:* How would your life be affected if there were no computers?

*Link to future:* Computers will always be an important part of our lives.

***TIP: Have students practice this exercise frequently with different topics.***

***TIP: Peer Review is a good way to help students identify what makes a good topic sentence.***



## Lesson Extension: Make It Dazzle! The Topic Sentence Challenge!

**WHEN:** After students have completed the *Make It Dazzle!* strategy.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Students learn to translate information presented in assignment form into a clear topic sentence that introduces their short essay answer.

**RATIONALE:** Reinforcement helps students internalize main concepts. In addition, this exercise forces students to think of multiple ways to handle the same information.

**DIRECTIONS:** On the following page, you'll find a reproducible exercise where students practice writing topic sentences. This template is designed to spread the exercise over an entire week. Here are the directions to give your students each day:

**Day One:** Write *one* "statement" topic sentence based on the topic assigned.

**Day Two:** Write a *new* "statement" topic sentence based on the topic assigned and a second one that is a "question" topic sentence.

**Days Three, Four, Five:** On each night, write three new topic sentences based on the topic assigned: one "statement", one "question", and one "surprise/grabber".

You'll notice that we left the *topic* blank so that you can customize the assignment to material you are covering in class. Or, if you prefer, you can use one of these suggested topics:

- Some kids like to play sports. Some play video games. Some love to read. How do you like to spend your free time?
- Describe something you do very well.
- What's your favorite subject in school? Explain why.

# The Topic Sentence Challenge Template

**Essay Topic:**

---

---

**Day One:** Write a statement topic sentence based on the topic above.

---

---

---

**Day Two:** Write a *different* “statement” topic sentence based on this topic and then write a *second* topic sentence in the form of a question.

Statement:

---

---

Question:

---

---

**Day Three:** Write 3 *new* topic sentences. One “statement”, one “question”, one “grabber”.

Statement:

---

---

Question:

---

---

Surprise/Grabber:

---

---

**Day Four:** Write 3 *new* topic sentences. One “statement”, one “question”, one “grabber”.

Statement:

---

---

Question:

---

---

Surprise/Grabber:

---

---

**Day Five:** Write 3 *new* topic sentences. One “statement”, one “question”, one “grabber”.

Statement:

---

---

Question:

---

---

Surprise/Grabber:

---

---



## Lesson Extension: Make It Dazzle! The Signal Word Challenge!

**WHEN:** After students complete the *Make It Dazzle!* strategy.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Students become more familiar with using signal words and understanding how they add meaning to an essay.

**RATIONALE:** This exercise provides multi-sensory reinforcement because students see, hear, and handle the signal words. It demonstrates how multiple signal words can be used in the same blank and requires that students discern from context clues the signal words and phrases that work best from the context clues given. Also, the competition can be motivating.

**DIRECTIONS:** On the following pages, we've provided a list of signal words (along with nine blanks where you can add your own signal words).

1. Make two copies of the list of signal words.
2. Cut up each page so that each signal word or phrase is on its own piece of paper. (*Hint: Laminating each sheet before you cut them up will give the signal words longer life.*)
3. Put all the words in a bag labeled "**Make It Dazzle!**" and have each of your students pick at least two choices from the bag.
4. Present students with a paragraph where the signal words are left out. (We've provided three, although you can use any paragraph you choose.)
5. As a student reads the paragraph aloud, ask your class to hold up their words every time they think their signal word or phrase works in the blank.
6. Consider all words to see which work best.
7. Reread the paragraph with the signal words in place.
8. Ask students if they can think of additional signal words (not distributed) that could work to complete the sentences.

***TIP: If you copy the paragraphs onto poster board and glue Velcro dots on the back of the signal words, students will be able to stick their signal words directly onto the poster board.***

## SIGNAL WORDS TEMPLATE

**Directions:** Cut along dotted lines. There are nine blanks where you can add any other signal words you want to encourage your students to use.

<b>First,</b>	<b>Last of all,</b>	<b>In contrast,</b>
<b>Second,</b>	<b>In addition,</b>	<b>In the first place,</b>
<b>Also,</b>	<b>Furthermore,</b>	<b>In my opinion,</b>
<b>So,</b>	<b>For instance,</b>	<b>On the other hand,</b>
<b>After,</b>	<b>As a result,</b>	<b>In comparison with...</b>
<b>Yet,</b>	<b>In addition,</b>	<b>In the same way,</b>
<b>Since,</b>	<b>Although...</b>	<b>To sum up,</b>
<b>Next,</b>	<b>Therefore,</b>	<b>In other words,</b>
<b>However,</b>	<b>Compared to...</b>	<b>In conclusion,</b>
<b>Third,</b>	<b>For example,</b>	<b>At the same time,</b>
<b>In fact,</b>	<b>In summary,</b>	<b>As you can see,</b>
<b>Finally,</b>	<b>Similarly,</b>	<b>Later,</b>

## The Signal Word Challenge Templates

### DIRECTIONS:

Cut along the dotted lines. Then duplicate these paragraphs and distribute them to your students. If you prefer, you can rewrite each paragraph on the board or copy it onto a transparency.

#### Signal Words Paragraph #1:

Jerome decided to make dinner for his mother last Tuesday because she had the flu. \_\_\_\_\_, he fixed a bowl of chicken soup. \_\_\_\_\_, he made a turkey sandwich with lettuce and tomato. \_\_\_\_\_, he placed the soup and sandwich on a cookie sheet, along with a napkin, fork, knife, and spoon. \_\_\_\_\_, he added the newspaper. \_\_\_\_\_, he carried the cookie sheet with everything on it up to his mom's room. She greeted him with a big smile that let Jerome know he had done a good thing.

#### Signal Words Paragraph #2:

Last week, my sixth grade class went on a field trip to the local science museum, so we could learn about different inventions. \_\_\_\_\_, a guide showed us how Benjamin Franklin discovered electricity. \_\_\_\_\_, she showed us a working model of the cotton gin built by Eli Whitney. \_\_\_\_\_, she let us try out a model of the first telephone built by Alexander Graham Bell. We \_\_\_\_\_ saw a movie about Wilbur and Orville Wright and how they built the first airplane. Next month, my class will use everything we learned about inventing to create our own inventions for the school science fair.

*Signal Words Paragraph #3:*

My older sister, Jocelyn, just got her driver's license, and she sure had to do a lot of hard work to get it. \_\_\_\_\_, she had to take a course called "Driver's Education," where you sit in a classroom and learn how cars work and what the laws are. \_\_\_\_\_, that course lasted three months. \_\_\_\_\_, my mom took Jocelyn out in our car to practice driving. \_\_\_\_\_, Jocelyn practiced driving with my mom about twenty times. She \_\_\_\_\_ had to do six hours of driving with her driver's education teacher. \_\_\_\_\_, she had to sit in a car watching while other kids practiced driving for another twelve hours. \_\_\_\_\_, Jocelyn had to make an appointment for a road test with a state police trooper. She was very nervous about that. \_\_\_\_\_, watching all that my sister had to do made me realize how much time and work it takes to learn to drive.



## **DURING Lesson Extension: Make It Dazzle! Mystery Game**

**WHEN:** After students complete the *Make It Dazzle!* strategy.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Students get experiential practice using signal words.

**RATIONALE:** By experimenting with signal words, students begin to see how they add dimension (i.e. suspense) to context.

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Using the reproducible sheet of signal words on the next page, cut out the words and phrases.
2. Distribute 2—3 words or phrases to each student.
3. Explain to your students that they will be brainstorming a mystery story by creating sentences that follow the previous one and lead up to solving the mystery.
4. Review the following rules:
  - Each student must get a chance to participate at least once.
  - Students must make an effort to include at least one of the signal words they were given.
  - Signal words may not be re-used in the same story.
5. Write a sentence starter, such as the proverbial “*It was a dark and stormy night.*” Continue scribing as each student calls out the next logical sentence.
6. Determine when you would like the students to wrap it up by announcing that it’s time to move toward solving the mystery. The last sentence should come from a student who has a concluding signal word.
7. Have someone read the entire mystery with dramatic expression.
8. Discuss how removing the signal words would affect the story.

## Signal Words for Mystery Game Template

**DIRECTIONS:** Duplicate and cut along dotted lines. Use the blanks to add additional signal words you want your students to use.

<b>However,</b>	<b>Suddenly,</b>	<b>In addition,</b>
<b>On the other hand,</b>	<b>Also,</b>	<b>As you can see,</b>
<b>In my opinion,</b>	<b>First,</b>	<b>To sum up,</b>
<b>Finally,</b>	<b>Unfortunately,</b>	<b>For example,</b>
<b>In comparison,</b>	<b>Afterwards,</b>	<b>Furthermore,</b>
<b>Yet,</b>	<b>At the same time,</b>	<b>In fact,</b>
<b>Although</b>	<b>In contrast,</b>	<b>Next,</b>
<b>Meanwhile,</b>		



## **DURING Lesson Extension: Make It Dazzle! Sentence Starters**

**WHEN:** Anytime.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** With exposure to some of the different ways to start a sentence, students begin to consider the value of variety in writing their own essays.

**RATIONALE:** Some students have trouble getting started when writing an essay. Having this list of “trigger words” can give them a jumpstart. This list is particularly handy for students who have trouble organizing language and word-finding.

**DIRECTIONS:** Give students a copy of the Sentence Starters list to keep in their notebooks. Put up the list in your classroom an essay test.

***Tip: Each time you give students a writing assignment, select 3-5 specific sentence starters for them to include in the essay.***

## Sentence Starters Template

**One criticism...**

**One of the most remarkable...**

**One of the most respected...**

**One solution...**

**One of the most important...**

**One way to look at...**

**The most common problem...**

**The most important...**

**The most significant...**

**The primary reason that...**

**The main point is...**

**The main idea...**

**Another controversy...**

**Another example...**

**Another factor to consider...**

**Another issue related to...**

**Another possible solution...**

**Another significant event...**

**Another significant factor...**

**Another way that...**

**Another argument in favor of...**

**A main reason that...**

**A major factor...**

**A major reason for...**

**One reason for...**

**An idea to think about is...**

**An example of...**



## **DURING Lesson Extension: Tie It Up The Tie It Up Challenge!**

**WHEN:** After students complete the strategy *Tie It Up*.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Students experience how many different ways there are to end the same essay.

**RATIONALE:** Because the beginning and end are often the most challenging parts of writing an essay, students benefit by having to think about multiple ways to end the same paragraph.

**DIRECTIONS:** On the following page, you'll find a reproducible assignment designed to last throughout an entire week.

**Day One:** Write *one* concluding sentence for the paragraph presented.

**Days Two and Three:** Write *two* new possible concluding sentences for the paragraph.

**Days Four and Five:** Write *three* new concluding sentences for the paragraph.

It will be helpful when beginning this exercise to encourage your students to experiment with all the different ways there are to end an essay as shown in Essay Express.

We've left the paragraph blank so that you can customize the assignment to material you are covering in class. Or, if you prefer, you can use one of the paragraphs included.

You may want to review with your class the Essay Express techniques for writing a concluding sentence:

- 1. Summarize main point**
- 2. Draw a conclusion**
- 3. End with a question**
- 4. Show the need for change or action**
- 5. End with a famous quote**

***TIP: Before you hand out the following paragraphs, brainstorm with your class some common words and phrases used to begin a concluding sentence.***

# The Tie It Up Challenge Template

**Directions:** Duplicate these paragraphs so students can write their own concluding sentences.

Tie It Up Paragraph #1:

Last Sunday morning, my mom went out to our back porch to read the newspaper. When she got to the comics, she saw one that she thought I would like. So, she left the newspaper on the porch and came inside to get me. While she was gone, a gust of wind blew the newspaper off the table and all over the yard. By the time we got back to the porch, we had to run around to collect all the pieces.

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---

## The Tie It Up Challenge Template

### Tie It Up Paragraph #2:

Our neighbors invited my family to spend a few days at their rented cabin on a lake. We weren't sure what we were going to do there, so we decided to pack as much as we could fit in the car. For example, I packed a big beach ball and my boogie board. My sister took a pool float, radio, and book. My dad packed a tennis racket, a baseball with two gloves, and golf clubs. Last of all, my mom made sure we had plenty of food, lounge chairs, sunscreen, and hiking boots.

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### Tie It Up Paragraph #3:

Last summer my family went rafting in Montana and had an adventure. We were floating down the Missouri River when a rain shower suddenly turned into a thunderstorm. By the time we got out of the water, the rain had turned to big hailstones. We turned our raft upside down, crawled underneath, and used it to protect ourselves from the hail. We had to wait nearly an hour for the storm to end!

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## Lesson Extension: QuEST to do your best

**WHEN:** After completing QuEST to do your best. We recommend this as an in-class assignment.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Students practice applying the steps of *QuEST to do your best* and see how revisions can improve an essay.

**RATIONALE:** By reinforcing and practicing the editing process, students begin to internalize the technique.

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Copy the following *Topic* and *Original Essay* on the board or onto an overhead. Or, duplicate and distribute to your class.
2. Orally, review with your class the ways the paragraph could be improved. If you choose, you can use the *Model Revision* below as a guide.

*Topic:* Discuss your recent whale watch field trip and describe what you observed.

*Original Essay:*

This field trip really stunk. We were supposed to see whales on the whale watch. We saw some ducks and seagulls. It was really boring. Our teacher got a free pass to take us on a different day. I hope we see some whales then!

*Model Revision:*

What is a whale watch without the whales? Unfortunately, on this field trip we could only observe some ducks and seagulls. It would have been really boring except that the seagulls were huge. As a matter of fact, one of my classmates said they looked like they were on steroids! The standard size ducks could be seen on the way out to the ocean and on the way back into port. Fortunately, our teacher got a free pass to take us on a different day. So, maybe we could call the whales in advance and tell them when we are coming!

**TIP:** Write the words “Remember: QuEST to do your best!” at the end of each test to serve as a reminder to students to check their essays.



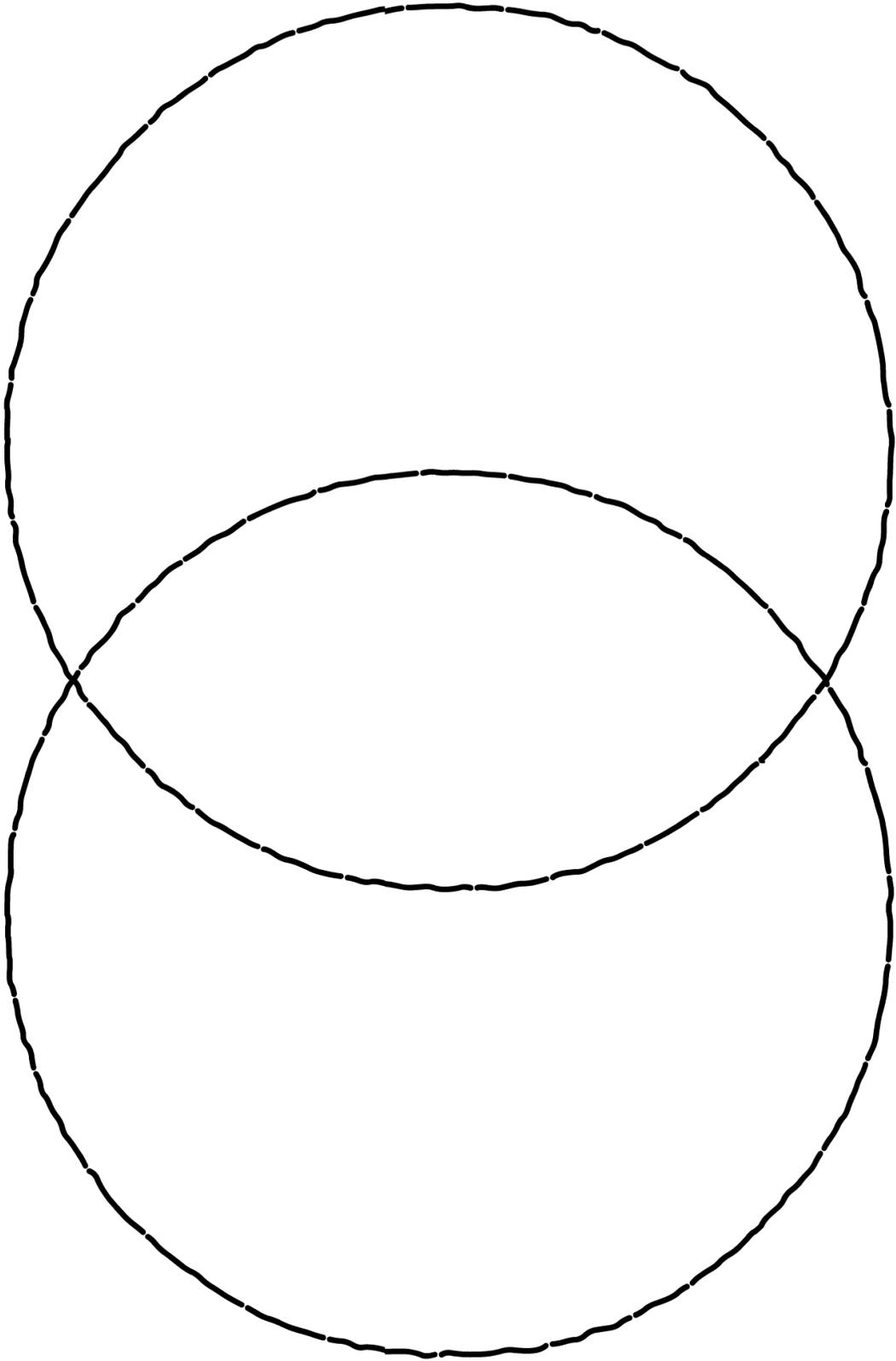
## ESSAY EXPRESS REPRODUCIBLES

All of the materials that can be reproduced from the Essay Express software are also included here to make duplication as easy as possible.

This section of the guide contains five reproducibles.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
1. Venn Diagram	This graphic template helps distinguish similarities and differences, which assists in comparing and contrasting.
2. T-Chart	This graphic template helps compare two things and is used to identify similarities.
3. Sketch It Out	This template assists students when planning an essay by helping to visually organize the essay components.
4. Signal Words	Students can keep this list of common signal words nearby while writing, which helps to add meaning to sentences and guide the reader.
5. Pieces of a Thesis <sup>®</sup>	This template or map is for planning a 5-paragraph essay.

**VENN DIAGRAM**





# Sketch It Out!

**Question:**

--

**Topic Sentence**


**Evidence: Supporting Detail 1**


**Evidence: Supporting Detail 2**


**Evidence: Supporting Detail 3**


**Conclusion:**


# SIGNAL WORDS

## **LISTING IN ORDER:**

First,  
Second,  
Third,  
Next,  
After,  
Finally,  
At the same time,  
Last of all,  
In the first place,

## **ADDING OR SUPPORTING IDEAS:**

In addition,  
Also,  
So,  
Furthermore,  
In my opinion,  
In other words,

## **ADDING DETAILS:**

For example,  
For instance,  
In fact,

## **COMPARE AND CONTRAST:**

On the other hand,  
Although...  
However,  
Yet,  
In contrast,  
In comparison with...  
Compared to...  
Similarly,  
In the same way,

## **CAUSE AND EFFECT:**

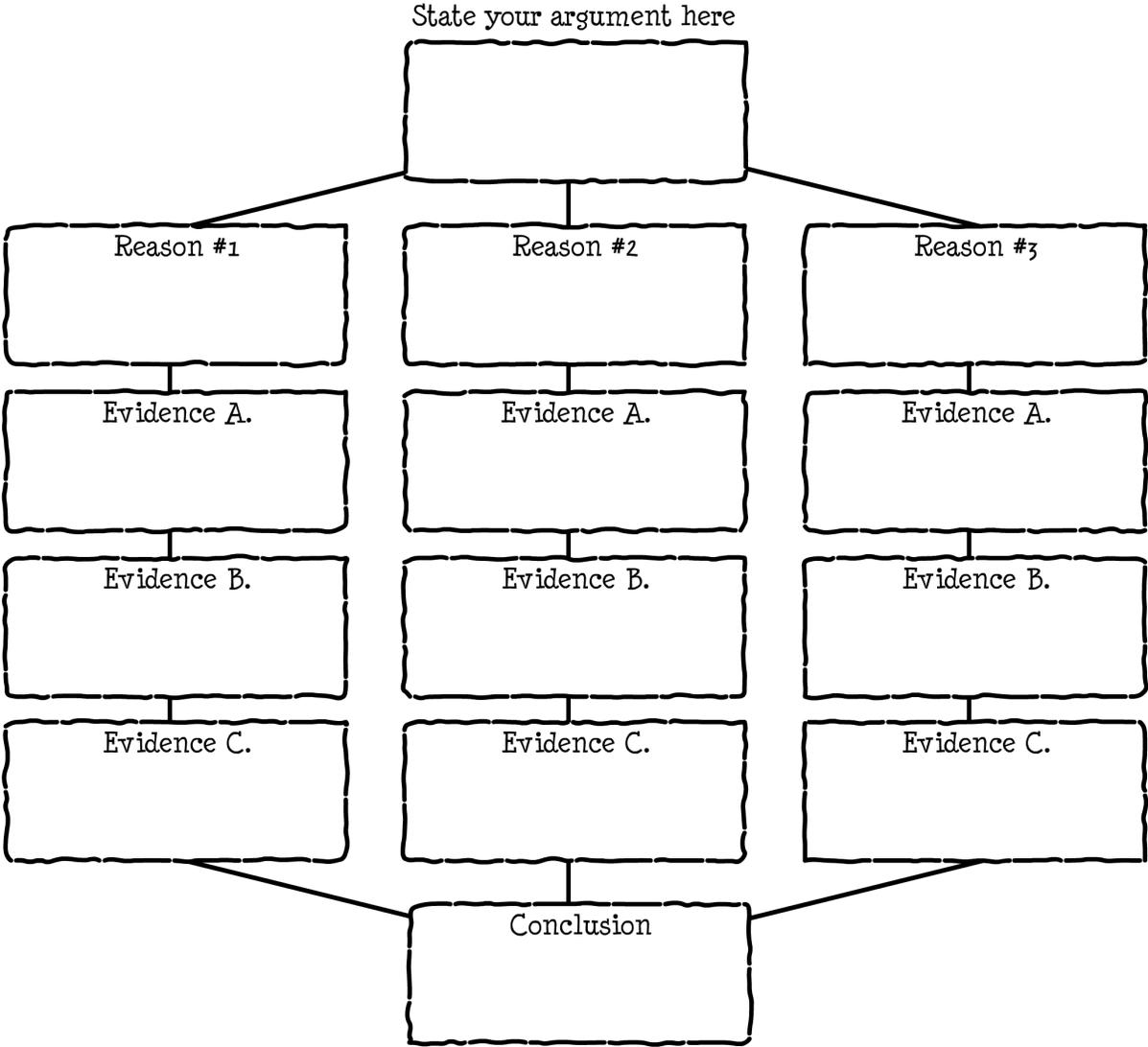
As a result,  
Therefore,  
Since...  
If...then...

## **CONCLUDING:**

As you can see,  
To sum up,  
In conclusion,  
In summary,

# Pieces of a Thesis

Written by Susan Taber M.Ed.  
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# NOTES