

Informational / Explanatory Essays

The purpose of an informative essay, sometimes called an expository or explanatory essay, is to educate your reader on a certain topic. This essay is **not** for giving your opinion or convincing someone to do something. In addition to being informative, it needs to be interesting, or you will lose the attention of your reader.



Structure of an Informative Essay

The basic structure of an informative essay is very simple. It needs to have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

The Introduction (Paragraph # 1)

- The introduction needs to present the topic and grab the attention of the audience. It needs to include a topic sentence for the entire essay, also called a **thesis sentence**.

The Body (Paragraphs # 2, 3, and 4)

- The body paragraphs will be the bulk of the essay and it will contain all the **evidence** that you will use to support your thesis and your **elaboration** to explain the significance of your evidence.

The Conclusion (Paragraph # 5)

- The conclusion is where you will summarize the essay. It should encourage your reader to go out and learn more about the topic.

The Five-Paragraph Essay Format



The Five Paragraph Essay format will help you to stay organized and on topic. Use the following five-paragraph structure to assist you in writing your informational/explanatory essay.

- ✓ **First Paragraph: (Introductory Paragraph)**
The introductory paragraph includes the topic sentence (thesis). This is the sentence where you will tell your reader what your essay is about, and it will usually be the last sentence of your first paragraph. You will also introduce supporting evidence here, but will not go into detail on any of it.

- ✓ **Second Paragraph**
You will provide your first piece of **evidence** in this paragraph and **elaborate** on how it supports your thesis.

- ✓ **Third Paragraph**
You will provide your second piece of **evidence** here and **elaborate** on how it supports your thesis. This evidence must come from a different source than the first piece of evidence you used in paragraph two.

- ✓ **Fourth Paragraph**
You will provide your third piece of **evidence** here and **elaborate** on how it supports your thesis. This evidence must come from a different source than the first two pieces of evidence that you have used so far in your essay.

- ✓ **Fifth Paragraph (Conclusion)**
The concluding paragraph needs to restate, in different words, the most interesting information in your essay. This is where you wrap everything up and tie it all together.

In-Text Citations

When you provide evidence in your body paragraphs, you need to be sure to give credit to the original author. Here is how you will give credit using in-text citations.

Rules for MLA in-text citations

1. Author named in the sentence:

Ordinarily, it is best to introduce the material being cited with a lead in that includes the author's name. In addition to preparing readers for the source, the lead in allows you to keep the parenthetical citation brief.

EXAMPLE

Frederick Lane reports that employers do not necessarily have to use software to monitor how their employees use the Web: employers can “use a hidden video camera pointed at an employee’s monitor and even position a camera so that a number of monitors [can] be viewed at the same time.” (par. 14).

The lead in — *Frederick Lane reports* — names the author; the parenthetical citation gives the page number of the book (or a paragraph number such as par. 4) in which the quoted words may be found.

** Notice that the period follows the parenthetical citation.

2. Author named in parentheses:

If a lead in does not name the author, put the author's last name in parentheses along with the page number. Use no punctuation between the name and the page number.

** If you are providing the author's last name and paragraph number, you must include a comma to separate the two (Fredrick, par. 4).

EXAMPLE

“Companies can monitor employees’ every keystroke without legal penalty, but they may have to combat low morale as a result.” (Lane 129).

Practice Body Paragraph

For the body paragraphs of our essay, we are going to use the five-sentence paragraph structure.

- Sentence # 1 **Topic Sentence**
What is the subject of this paragraph? What statement are you trying to make?
- Sentence # 2 **Evidence**
Use quoted evidence from a source to support your topic sentence
- Sentence # 3 **Elaboration**
Explain what that evidence shows us.
- Sentence # 4 **Elaboration # 2**
Share with the reader something else that we can learn from that piece of evidence.
- Sentence # 5 **Conclusion**
What is the result of the ideas above? What have we learned from gaining an understanding of your evidence?

Example:

Topic Sentence: One reason why we should all try to have a more balanced diet is that it helps us to have more energy throughout the day.
Evidence: In his article “The Benefits of Living Healthy”, Dr. Carl Brown says, “It is essential that we eat healthy, well balanced meals, so that our energy levels will remain constant from the time that you wake up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night.” (par. 13).
Elaboration # 1: We see examples of this every day when students start to lose focus in class because they lack energy.
Elaboration # 2: A healthy diet can provide the energy that students will need to get their work done to the best of their ability.
Concluding Sentence : We can only hope to achieve the goals that we set out for ourselves when we have the energy to complete the tasks necessary to reach those goals, and a well-balanced diet goes a long way to providing that energy.



Practice Performance Task

Writing Task

Your school is thinking about adding sports teams to its schedule and wants you to evaluate why this might be a good idea. The principal has asked you to write an article for the school newspaper explaining why you think that adding sports teams would be a good idea. As part of your initial research, you have uncovered three articles about the benefits of organized sports.

Step 1: Read, Analyze and Annotate Texts

Read the three articles that are dealing school sports. Annotate the articles and use the notes that you create to help shape your article.

Step 2: Start the Writing Process

Once you have finished the articles, you will then write your own article dealing with the benefits of school sports teams.

Your article should:

- ✓ have a clear thesis statement in the opening paragraph
- ✓ provide several pieces of evidence with elaboration (one piece of evidence for each of the three body paragraphs).
- ✓ have a conclusion

Step 3: Proofread

When you finish typing your article, be sure to proofread to make sure that all of your sentences make sense. Check spelling and grammar, and fix any sentences that don't sound natural.

Directions for Beginning:

You will now examine several sources. You can re-examine any of the sources as often as you like.

Sources for Performance Task

Source #1

Here is an article from Livestrong.Com

How Do Sports Help Kids in School?

by Kathryn Hatter

Sports and physical activity generally play a significant part in the school experience for many American kids. While there are benefits to involving a child in organized sports programs, there could also be negative drawbacks. Supervise and monitor your child's sporting experience to ensure that the positives outweigh the negatives.

Psychological Well-Being

A child participating in school sports stands to gain important psychological benefits, according to Marianne Engle, sports psychologist and clinical assistant professor, with the New York University Child Study Center. Kids playing sports may have reduced anxiety and depression. Children can also receive self-esteem boosts, which may improve confidence and school performance.

Social Interaction

Youngsters who play sports in school often enjoy enhanced social interaction, reports the National Association for Sport and Physical Education. The socialization that occurs with organized sports can help a youngster learn effective skills for interacting with both peers and adults. The peer culture that surrounds organized sports often plays an important role in the school environment. When a child feels integrated into this environment, her school performance may become stronger.

Character Building

Sports can provide your youngster with a variety of character-building experiences, according to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Kids can learn valuable lessons about how to cooperate with others and play fairly. A child can also develop strong self-discipline as he strives to learn and excel at a sport. If the youngster uses this self-discipline academically, he may improve school performance. Sports participation may enhance critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, too.

How Do Sports Help Kids in School? By Kathryn Hatter. In the public domain. Retrieved from: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/362903-how-does-sports-help-kids-in-school/>

Source #2

Here is an excerpt from an article from AboutKidsHealth.com

Organized Sports: A Winning Formula for Children

by Greg Wells and Shauna Silver

Children who take part in organized sports receive many social, mental and psychological benefits over and above those that come from general physical activity.

Healthy habits

Starting a child in an organized sport gives them a healthy habit of physical activity to see them right through to adulthood and help them ward off many age- and weight-related ailments. Even before adulthood, teens who take part in sports are less likely to smoke, do drugs or abuse alcohol.

Self-discipline

Learning the rules and techniques of a new sport and training for a particular purpose can give a child self-discipline that they can employ both on and off the field. Sports often help children learn that working hard helps them to achieve a goal.

Social skills and teamwork

When many people think of organized sports, team sports often spring to mind. Sports such as baseball, hockey or basketball can teach children to trust and rely on others to achieve common goals, value everyone's individual strengths and put collective needs before individual wants.

Improved mental health

Taking part in a sport can greatly improve a child's sense of self-worth. Whether it is the satisfaction of mastering a dribble or beating a personal best, sports-related exercise enables children to gain confidence in their skills. In an era of excessive focus on appearance, sports also provide an outlet for children, especially girls, to focus not on what their bodies look like but on what they can do. This has the knock-on benefit of improved [body image](#).

Sportsmanship

Taking part in anything competitive requires an ability to handle disappointments and accept personal responsibility for any mistakes. It can take a while for children - and some adults - to learn not to blame others when things go wrong. However, organized sports can teach important lessons about the value of taking part rather than winning and about using setbacks as learning opportunities.

Excerpt from Organized Sports: A Winning Formula for Children By Greg Wells, Associate Scientist, Physiology & Experimental Medicine Shawna Silver, MD, FRCPC, FAAP, Peng. In the public domain. Retrieved from:
<http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/HealthandWellness/PhysicalActivitySportsandFitness/Pages/participating-in-organized-sports.aspx>

Source #3

Here is an article from sheknows.Com

Organized Sports Are a Home Run

by Kristin Chessman

On the fence as to if you should sign your child up for a team sport? You should — and here's why! Organized sports are a home run in more ways than one. In fact, endurance sports have been proven to actually raise IQ, in addition to building confidence and teaching kids about emotional self-control. Need more proof? Read on to discover why team sports can help your child become a champion for life!

Organized sports not only keep kids healthier physically, but mentally as well. Research shows that children who play organized sports are frequently healthier and physically stronger than their less athletic peers — and they are smarter as well.

According to sports psychology author Jim Taylor, Ph.D., endurance sports have been found to enhance brain development and raise IQ. In addition, he says that sports build confidence, develop focus, and teach kids about emotional control. "Kids learn essential life skills, such as hard work, patience, persistence, and how to respond positively to setbacks and failure," Taylor says.

Find out how team sports encourage the following traits to help your child succeed.

1. How to get along with others (even those you don't like)

You know the old cliché, "there is no 'I' in team?" Organized sports teach children the essential life skill of getting along with teammates they might not necessarily like. According to licensed marriage and family therapist [Bette Alkazian](#), team sports teach children how to overlook an annoying teammate or a bad attitude. They also encourage friendship and empathy for fellow teammates. "When a friend gets hurt, you cheer for him and hope he finds the inner strength to push through and play on," she says.

Team sports bring together kids from various religious and cultural backgrounds, which is bound to provide a valuable learning experience. Teammates must learn how to adapt to and accept each others' cultures so they can work together as a team. Learning how to get along with people with many different personalities and with different cultures is a skill that will be needed when they enter the workforce and will take your child far past high school.

2. Benefits of friendly competition

When playing on a team, kids, coaches and parents spend plenty of time together. Making sure everyone gets along comes down to one simple word: respect. Not only will your little athletes learn to respect and honor their coach and the coach's decisions, but also to respect their fellow teammates. By noticing the strengths that each individual player brings to the team, they'll learn to appreciate and respect each others' talents. It's healthy to be competitive, but respect fosters a friendly competition that pushes each teammate to be the best he can be.

In addition, team sports will give your youngsters something to take pride in. Once they achieve goals they set for themselves, they'll gain pride in their success and confidence in their skills.

3. Creates future leaders

Even if your children don't have the athletic prowess to be the next Tom Brady, team sports give them some of the skills needed to be the next Bill Gates! Kids who participate in team sports are also more likely to be active, hard working students, and better future workers. That's because organized athletics teach kids how to be disciplined during practice, how to focus on the task at hand, and how to have patience when the going gets tough. Children playing team sports also have to learn how to achieve balance between their schoolwork and athletics, which fosters a strong work ethic both on and off the court.

4. You win some, you lose some

Even though you may get out the measuring stick at home to make sure each sibling has the same size piece of cake, kids must learn that in the real world life isn't always fair, unfortunately their team won't always win, and every call by the referee won't always seem fair. Dealing with disappointment will only make your youngsters stronger as they grow older. Not only will they gain the willpower to be the best athlete they can, but they'll also learn the importance of perseverance and endurance to get them through the rough times and most importantly, to never give up.

5. Helps kids find their swagger

Team sports are a huge self-esteem booster for kids to help them find their swagger. They'll gain greater confidence by learning about their own strengths and capabilities. In addition, kids involved

in athletics tend to be natural leaders and learning leadership skills at a young age will be a big boost someday in the corporate world.

For girls entering adolescence, team sports are especially important. As Tonia Caselman, Ph.D., points out, this is a time when most girls are being bombarded by messages about the importance of their looks and popularity, which can take a toll on their self-esteem and even lead to eating disorders. Team sports help build their confidence by proving that they're valued for more than just their looks.

Organized athletics also have the power to give your children courage. Picture it now: The team is tied with two seconds left, and your child is handed the basketball just in time to make the game-deciding shot. When the buzzer goes off, the ball goes through the net and your child throws her hands up in victory, you'll be reveling in her courage and confidence.

Organized Sports Are a Homerun By Kristin Chessman. In the public domain. Retrieved from: <http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/818473/Team-sports-How-kids-benefit-from-organized-athletics>

Student Directions for Part 2

Can organized sports help you out with your academics? Explanatory Performance Task:

You will now review your notes and sources, and plan, draft, revise, and edit your writing.

Your assignment:

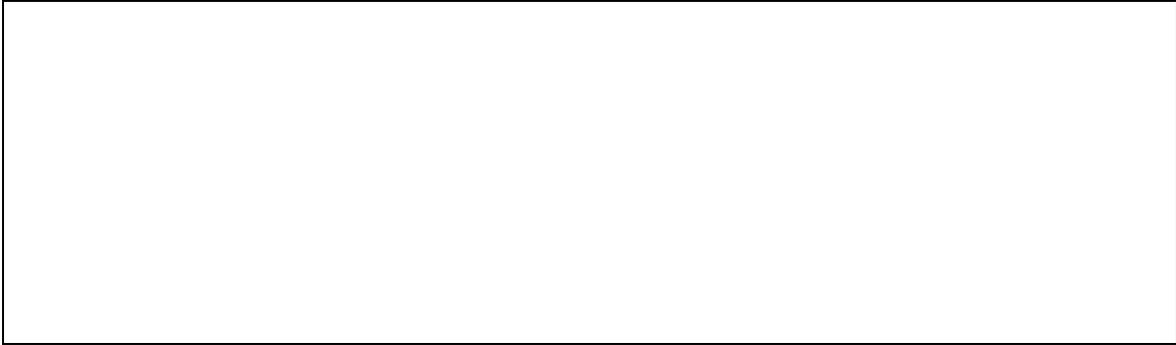
Your school is thinking about adding sports teams to its schedule. The principal has asked you to write an article for the school newspaper explaining why you think that adding sports teams would be a good idea. The audience for your article will be other students, teachers, and parents.

Using more than one source, develop a thesis (controlling idea) to explain why adding sports teams to the school's program is a good idea. Once you have a thesis, select the most relevant information to support it. Then, write a multi-paragraph informational essay explaining your thesis (controlling idea). Clearly organize your article and elaborate on your ideas. Unless quoting directly from the sources, use your own words. Be sure to reference the source title or number when quoting or paraphrasing details or facts from the sources.

Use the following graphic organizer to assist you in getting your thesis and evidence organized.

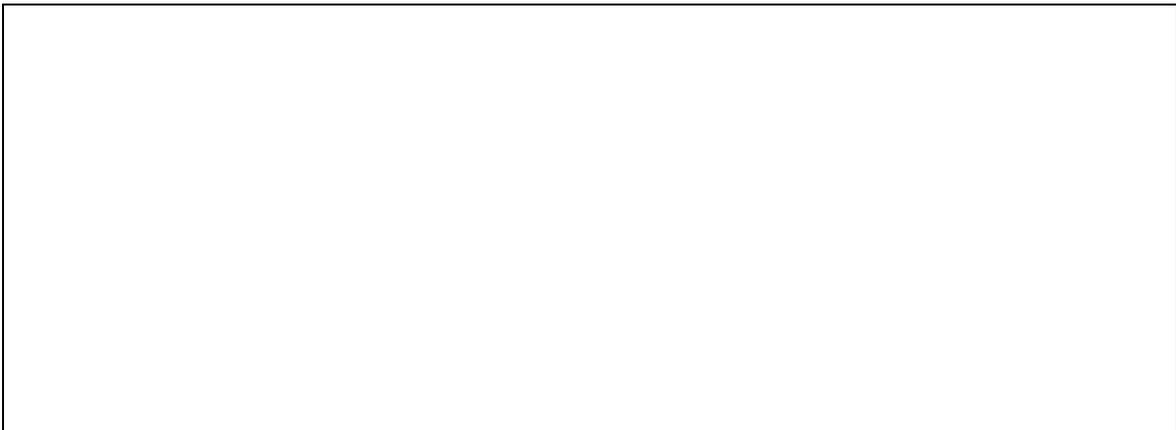
Paragraph 1:

Write a clear and coherent thesis sentence that will guide the rest of your essay. This will be the cornerstone of your first paragraph.



Paragraph 2:

Find your first piece of evidence from the source materials that will support your thesis. Be sure to use the correct citation to give credit to the author of this piece of information. This quoted evidence will be the cornerstone of your second paragraph.



Paragraph 3:

Find your second piece of evidence from the source materials that you will use to support your thesis. Be sure to use the correct citation to give credit to the author of this piece of information. This quoted evidence will be the cornerstone of your third paragraph.

Paragraph 4:

Find your third piece of evidence from the source materials that will support your thesis. Be sure to use the correct citation to give credit to the author of this piece of information. This quoted evidence will be the cornerstone of your fourth paragraph.

You now have all of the pieces that you will need to write an organized informational/explanatory essay.

Type you five paragraph Informational / Explanatory Essay and staple it to the back of this packet.