UWF WRITING LAB

WRITING GOOD THEMES

Use the following checklist of essentials in writing themes.

Title

The title should accurately suggest the contents of the paper.

It should attract interest without being excessively novel or clever.

It should not be too long.

NOTE: Do not underline or italicize the title of your own paper, and do not put quotation marks around it.

Introduction

The introduction should be independent from the title. No pronoun or noun in the opening sentence should depend for meaning of the title.

It should catch the reader’s attention.

It should properly establish the tone of the paper as serious, humorous, ironic, or otherwise.

It should include a thesis statement which declares the subject and the purpose directly but, at the same time, avoids worn patterns like “It is the purpose of this paper to . . .”

It should be closely related to the main topic of the theme.

It should not be too long.

Sometimes, it takes as long to write the first paragraph as to write all the rest of the paper. It is not unusual to have to throw away the first three or four starts. When a writer finally arrives at the first good statement, he or she then sees the larger meaning of his or her work. The introduction really defines the topic sentence, which is merely named in the title and, thereafter, every paragraph must make its own contribution and, at the same time, look back to the thesis sentence and state its connection to the over-all topic.

The introduction is not just a warm-up for a writer, a preliminary flourish which he or she makes before settling down to the business of developing the thesis statement. The introduction should also provide the reader with essential background information about the subject being discussed.

Body

The materials should develop the thesis statement.

The materials should be arranged in a logical sequence.

Strong topic sentences should clearly indicate the direction in which the paper is moving and the relevance of the paragraphs to the thesis statement.

Technical terms should be explained.

Paragraphs should not be choppy.

Enough space should be devoted to main ideas. Minor ideas should be subordinated.

Concrete details should be used appropriately. Insignificant details should be omitted.

Transitions

The connections between sentences and those between paragraphs should be shown by good linking words.

Conclusion

The conclusion should usually contain a final statement of the underlying idea, an overview of what the paper has demonstrated.

The conclusion may require a separate paragraph. But if the paper has reached significant conclusions all along, such a paragraph is not necessary for its own sake.

The conclusion should not merely restate the introduction.

Proofreading

Allow some time, at least one day if possible, between the last draft of the paper and the final finished copy. Then you can examine the paper objectively for wordiness, repetition, incorrect diction, misspellings, poor punctuation, choppy sentences, vague sentences, lack of transition, and careless errors.