

IONA PREP WRITING GUIDE



GRADES 9-12

Table of Contents

The Three Part Essay	
Overview of the Three-Part Essay	3
Three-Part Essay Structure	4
Three-Part Essay Organizer	5
The Research Paper	
Overview of the Research Paper	8
Selecting a Topic	9
Doing Preliminary Research	11
Preliminary Research Worksheet	13
Sample Preliminary Research Worksheet	15
Doing Research	17
Taking Notes	18
Creating an Outline	22
Outline Worksheet	24
Sample Outline	30
Writing a First Draft	33
Easybib – The Basics	36
Revising for Final Draft	38
Reflective Essay	
Overview of the Reflective Essay	39
Reflective Essay Structure	40
Reflective Essay Organizer	41
Point of View	44
Plagiarism	46

Overview of the Three-Part Essay

Introduction

Includes:

- general background info
- detailed background info
- thesis

Body (2-3 paragraphs)

Each paragraph includes:

- topic sentence
- 2-4 supporting details

Conclusion

Includes

- restatement of the thesis
- recap of main ideas
- “Food for Thought”

Three-Part Essay Structure

I. Introduction

- includes general background information followed by more detailed background
- includes a thesis statement that will be substantiated, asserted or proved in response to the question or prompt (usually a single sentence)

II. Body Paragraph(s) – usually 2-3

Each body paragraph

- starts with a topic sentence that connects to the thesis
- includes concrete details (2-4) to support the topic of the paragraph

III. Conclusion

- restates the thesis in different words
- recaps the main ideas
- includes “Food for Thought” – a statement that deepens the idea of the thesis and may open the door for further research

Three-Part Essay Organizer

Topic: _____

Introduction

General background: _____

More detailed background: _____

Thesis: _____

Body Paragraph 1

Topic Sentence: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Body Paragraph 2

Topic Sentence: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Body Paragraph 3

Topic Sentence: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Conclusion

Restatement of the thesis (in different words): _____

Recap of main ideas: _____

“Food for Thought”: _____

Overview of the Research Writing Process

All research papers at Iona Prep must follow the current MLA format and guidelines. The steps for the research paper are as follows:

- **Selecting a Topic**
- **Doing Preliminary Research**
- **Taking Notes**
- **Doing Research**
- **Creating an Outline**
- **Writing a First Draft**
- **Revising for Final Draft**

Selecting a Topic

This section will only apply if you are permitted to choose the topic for your paper.

If you are permitted to choose a topic, be sure to follow any parameters set by your teacher. (For example, in U.S. history you may only be permitted to choose a topic that is before 1900.)

I. Read for an overview of various topics

- Keep your own interests in mind when selecting your topic. If you are interested in the topic, the writing process may be easier for you.
- At this stage you may want to look at encyclopedias and general reference material even if you are not permitted to use them as sources for your paper. You need a general overview of your topic to see if you are interested in it and to get closer to narrowing your topic.

II. Jot down questions and ideas

- This step may help you narrow your focus. What do you want to know more about?
- Write down your questions and ideas. You will not remember them.

III. Survey the Information Available

- When you have some ideas written down, do preliminary research for each potential topic. How much information seems to be available in the library's databases? Is the information available one-sided? (See also the page on note taking.)

IV. Narrow the Topic

- The topic should be broad enough to fulfill the paper's length requirements, but not so broad that researching and organizing become problems.
- You can narrow your topic by considering a particular approach to the subject, or a sub-topic within it.
- Be careful not to narrow a topic too far; you must be able to develop a paper of the appropriate length.

V. Develop a Preliminary Thesis

- At this point you should be able to develop a preliminary thesis.

Check with your teacher regarding your topic before you begin the research steps. Be sure to secure any required approvals.

Start your research immediately after you select a topic to be sure that an appropriate amount of information is available on your topic. If there is not enough, consult your teacher about changing your topic.

Doing Preliminary Research

Doing initial research on a topic requires scanning the available information, possibly refining your topic based on what you have found, and selecting the most promising sources to work with. Take these steps to create your initial list of sources. Your teacher may or may not require you to turn in a preliminary research sheet. After reviewing the steps, look at the sample preliminary research sheet.

I. Plan your initial search

- Write a paragraph summarizing what you know about your topic. This can help you focus.
- Make a list of the possible search terms for internet and database searches.

II. Make an initial scan of resources

- Books – Use the library catalog to conduct a search using your search terms. You should also browse the shelves near the book or books you located using the catalog. There may not be a book devoted to your topic. You may have to think about what book might include information about your topic.
- Articles – Use the library’s databases and conduct a search using your search terms. The library’s databases contain sources that have already been evaluated, and they are usually of a high quality.
- Internet sources – Take a look at results from government agencies and nonprofit organizations (such as universities). Be careful when looking at internet sources. Be sure you know who published the information to help you determine if it is credible. You do not want to find out too late that you cannot use a source because it is not considered credible. (See Jakeway Library Page on ionaprep.org for “Website Evaluation for Research” presentation.)
- As you initially review information, you may want to update your search terms so that you can be led to more specific information.

III. Record information for promising sources

When you find sources that appear to be credible and you think would be valuable:

- Record complete bibliographic information for the source (Don't forget that EasyBib can help. See the section entitled "EasyBib – The Basics" in this guide.).
- Jot down some notes about the information the source contains and how it might be useful.
- Continue to update your search terms as you review information.

IV. Trace works cited in your initial sources

Take a close look at the most useful of the sources you have found so far.

- check to see if they have bibliographies
- see if any of those sources might be relevant for your research
- look up promising sources and record some notes and complete bibliographic information if they appear credible and useful

V. Revisit your topic

If your preliminary research has caused you to rethink your topic, be sure to indicate your new topic on the preliminary research sheet. If necessary, be sure to gain approval from your teacher before changing or adjusting your topic.

VI. Compile a complete preliminary research list

Make a list of the most promising sources in MLA format.

Preliminary Research Worksheet

Topic: _____

What do you already know about your topic? _____

What search terms will you initially use?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What additional terms might you use? (After you have done initial searches):

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

List the sources from your initial search that appear to be the most promising. Include complete bibliographic information in MLA format.

Source #1 _____

Bibliographic Information: _____

Notes: _____

Source #2 _____

Bibliographic Information: _____

Notes: _____

Source #3 _____

Bibliographic Information: _____

Notes: _____

Source #4 _____

Bibliographic Information: _____

Notes: _____

Source #5 _____

Bibliographic Information: _____

Notes: _____

Continue on additional paper if necessary.

Sample Preliminary Research Worksheet

Topic: The influence of the work of Pablo Picasso on American Art

What do you already know about your topic? Pablo Picasso was a famous Spanish artist known for his abstract art. He was a part of the cubist movement in art. Pablo Picasso created works of art in the 1930s that were forms of protest against the fascism in Spain. One of his famous works of art was called Guernica and depicted a massacre in a town of that name.

What search terms will you initially use?

<u>Pablo Picasso American Art</u>	<u>Picasso in America</u>
<u>Pablo Picasso's influence</u>	
<u>Inspired by Pablo Picasso</u>	

What additional terms might you use? (After you have done initial searches):

<u>Pablo Picasso art lesson</u>	<u>Pablo Picasso art style</u>

List the sources from your initial search that appear to be the most promising. Include complete bibliographic information in MLA format.

Source #1 New York Times Article

Bibliographic Information:

Kimmelman, Michael. "Everybody Loves Pablo." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 28 Sept. 2006. Web. 14 Jan. 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/29/arts/design/29pica.html?_r=0>.

Notes: *This article explains the connection between Picasso's work and the work of specific American artists. It is a review of a 2006 art show that connected Picasso to American artists.*

Source #2 *Art Institute of Chicago*

Bibliographic Information:

"Picasso and American Art." *The Art Institute of Chicago*. The Art Institute of Chicago, n.d. Web. 14 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.artic.edu/picasso-and-american-art>>.

Notes: *This entry on the Art Institute's website describes the Picasso and American Art exhibit that appeared at the museum.*

Source #3 _____

Bibliographic Information: _____

Notes: _____

Source #4 _____

Bibliographic Information: _____

Notes: _____

Doing Research

I. Information Search

- Your information search should be focused on your topic, but pay attention to everything you find. Keep your mind open to continue learning about your topic.
- Use credible sources, many of which are available through the Jakeway Library. See the “Library” folder on Edline for passwords for the library’s databases.
- Carefully record your sources in MLA format. Every piece of information you collect should have bibliographic information written down at the time you first look at it. If you are quoting a source, use quotation marks when you take notes.
- You should also pay attention to the quality of the information you find, especially if you're using information you find on the Internet.

II. Clarifying Your Focus

- As you gather information about your focused topic, you may find *new* information that prompts you to refine, clarify, extend, or narrow your focus. Stay flexible and adjust your information search to account for the changes, widening or narrowing your search, or heading down a slightly different path to follow a new lead.

III. Organize Your Notes

- Start organizing your notes into logical groups. You may notice gaps in your research. This is the time to do research to fill in those gaps.
- Make sure that all of your notes are carefully labeled so that when you sort items, you know the source from which they came.

IV. Refine Your Thesis

- The thesis statement is the main point of your paper. As you gather specific information and refine your focus, intentionally look for a main point to your findings. Sometimes a thesis emerges obviously from the material, and other times you may struggle to bring together the parts into a sensible whole.
- Be sure to comply with any specifications your teacher has indicated.

Taking Notes

If you take good notes when researching, you will have useful information when drafting your outline and paper. There are a variety of ways to record notes when doing research. The one presented here is traditional and good for beginning researchers. It requires the use of index cards and will allow you to physically arrange your notes to reflect the structure of your paper. If you are not required by your teacher to use the method presented here and wish to use an electronic note-taking method, a list of options is presented at the end of this section.

Source Cards

For each source you use, you must create a numbered source card or add the complete bibliographic information for the source to an electronic source list with each source numbered.

Sample Source Cards (The source number is in the upper right corner.)

Sample for a book source

1

*Meyers, Jeffrey. Edgar Allan Poe.
New York: Scribner's, 1992.*

Sample for a website source (It is good practice to include the URL in case you need to reference the source again.)

2

*Gould, Stephen, ed. Edgar Allan Poe's
Life. Poe Historical Society. 3 March
2000. Web. 24 June 2000.
<<http://www.historicalsoc.com.html>>.*

Sample Electronic Source List

- Type up your list – and SAVE it!
- Assign a number to each source.
- Be sure to add to your source list each time you use a new source.)

Source List

1. Meyers, Jeffrey. *Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Scribner's, 1992.
2. Gould, Stephen, ed. *Edgar Allan Poe's Life*. Poe Historical Society. 3 March 2000. Web. 24 June 2000. <<http://www.historicalsoc.com.html>>.

Note Cards

When taking notes on cards be sure to:

- Write a key word or phrase in the upper left corner.
- Place the source number in the upper right corner.
- Include the page number (if applicable) in the lower right corner.
- Write your notes in the center of the card. Include quotation marks if you are copying directly from the source.

Sample Note Card - Paraphrasing (Restate the material using your own words and sentence structure.)

<i>Merits of King's Speech</i>	1
<i>James Wisdom claims that the "I Have a Dream Speech" by Martin Luther King Jr., is one of the century's best examples of rhetoric. King uses repetition and biblical allusions well and is sincere and purposeful. King made the speech August 28, 1963, in Washington D.C., in front of a quarter of a million people.</i>	
	p. 206

Sample Note Card - Direct Quotation (Be sure to copy exactly from your source and use quotation marks.)

<i>King's Speech</i>	2
<i>"I have a dream, too - that the literary merits of Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream" speech will be thoroughly appreciated in every speech class in the nation."</i>	
	p. 206

Electronic Note-Taking Tools

For annotated and file management (Helpful when using a large number of documents.)

- Mendeley
- Zotero
- Diigo

Notes management

- Microsoft OneNote
- Evernote

Mobile and tablet apps

- Notability
- UPAD
- Note Taker HD
- Catch Notes

Creating an Outline

I. Organize Your Information

- Look at your information. If there are natural categories developing, begin to organize your information around those.
- Separate background information that is too general in relation to your topic.
- It might be helpful to think of your topic as a question and then “answer” it in your head. Are there multiple answers? If yes, then those might be your categories.
- It might be helpful to try to start an outline at this point or to use a graphic organizer.

II. Construct a Thesis Statement

- Write the thesis statement. Boil down the main point of your paper to a single statement.
- *Hamilton College (Williams & Reidy)* gives this explanation of the thesis statement: “A well-written thesis statement, usually expressed in one sentence, is the most important sentence in your entire paper. It should both summarize for your reader the position you will be arguing and set up the pattern of organization you will use in your discussion. A thesis sentence is not a statement of accepted fact; it is the position that needs the proof you will provide in your argument. Your thesis should reflect the full scope of your argument—no more and no less; beware of writing a thesis statement that is too broad to be defended within the scope of your paper.”
- Another way to summarize the nature and function of the thesis statement is that it is a single sentence, usually in the first paragraph of the paper, which:
 - declares the position you are taking in your paper,
 - sets up the way you will organize your discussion, and
 - points to the conclusion you will draw.

III. Weed Out Irrelevant Information

- At this point, you will likely find that you have notes and citations from your research that you do not need. You will have to get rid of them. If it doesn't relate to and

support the thesis you've chosen, don't try to cram it into the paper—just set the information aside.

IV. Research to Fill in the Gaps

- Once you've constructed your thesis and identified which of your research notes you'll use, you may see some gaps where you need additional support for a point you want to make. Do targeted research to fill in those gaps.

V. Create an Outline - See sample.

Outline Worksheet

Introduction (This will likely be a fairly short paragraph and must include your thesis.)

Background - Write down a few pieces of information that you will include in your background paragraph.

Thesis – Write down your thesis sentence. Your thesis sentence should include an overview of your entire paper and reference each of the topics you will cover.

Topic 1 (This will be multiple paragraphs. You can introduce the topic at the beginning of the first sub-topic paragraph.) On this line just state what your first topic is.

Topic Sentence (Write out the exact sentence that will be in your paper for this section.)

Sub-topic 1

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Sub-topic 2

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Subtopic 3 (optional)

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Topic 2 (This will be multiple paragraphs. You can introduce the topic at the beginning of the first sub-topic paragraph.)

Topic Sentence (Write out the exact sentence that will be in your paper for this section.)

Sub-topic 1

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Sub-topic 2

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Subtopic 3 (optional)

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Topic 3 (optional)

Topic Sentence (Write out the exact sentence that will be in your paper for this section.)

Sub-topic 1

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Sub-topic 2

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Subtopic 3 (optional)

Topic sentence for this subtopic

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Conclusion (List any information/ideas/points you will make in the conclusion.)

Sample Outline

Title: Influences on Abraham Lincoln's Political Career

Introduction

Background

Dates of Lincoln's Presidency

Controversial Election

Achievements of his presidency

Assassination

Thesis – Abraham Lincoln's family, education, and work experiences each had a significant impact on his political career.

Topic 1 – Influence of Abraham Lincoln's Family

Topic Sentence – Abraham Lincoln's family played a critical role in the development of his political career.

Sub-topic 1 – Sarah Bush Lincoln

Topic sentence for this subtopic – Lincoln was heavily influenced by his stepmother, Sarah (Sally) Bush Lincoln

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Lincoln's mother died when he was 9.

She encouraged Lincoln to read.

She brought a collection of books with her when she married Thomas Lincoln

Sub-topic 2 - Lincoln's wife

Topic sentence for this subtopic – Abraham Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, played a significant role in the path of his political career.

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Mary Todd Lincoln was a wealthy socialite and gave Lincoln legitimacy.

Mary Lincoln supported Lincoln and managed the household when he was away.

Mary Lincoln visited wounded soldiers during the Civil War and played the role of First Lady despite suffering from headaches.

Topic 2 - Lincoln's Education

Topic Sentence – Education had a very positive influence on Abraham Lincoln's political career.

Sub-topic 1 – Education in Lincoln's youth

Topic sentence - Despite having little formal education, Lincoln received a good education.

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Lincoln had a total of 12 months of formal schooling.

Lincoln read a lot when he was young in Illinois.

His sister encouraged him to write, including poems.

Sub-topic 2 – Legal education

Topic sentence - Lincoln's education in the law drew him into politics.

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Lincoln was a self-taught lawyer.

Lincoln passed the bar in 1836.

Abraham Lincoln worked on some important cases that brought attention to him.

Topic 3 – Work experience

Topic Sentence – Abraham Lincoln's work experiences were important stepping stones on his path to the presidency.

Sub-topic 1 – Lincoln’s work before his political career

Topic sentence – Abraham Lincoln’s jobs before he entered politics were formative.

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

Gained business knowledge as a ferryman.

Entertained people and gained knowledge of the community as a clerk in a general store.

Lincoln volunteered to fight Indians in the Black Hawk War.

He was appointed postmaster of New Salem, IL by Andrew Jackson.

Lincoln handled routine legal matters in his county.

Sub-topic 2 - Political experience

Topic sentence – Abraham Lincoln’s political experiences led him to the presidency.

Information (from notecards) to support this subtopic

As a member of the Whig Party, Lincoln won his first political job in the Illinois legislature.

He served in the legislature for four terms.

He served only one term in the House of Representatives.

He joined the Republican Party and ran for U.S. Senate, but lost to Stephen Douglas.

Conclusion

Lincoln had a varied and unique combination of talents and experiences.

Lincoln was often in the right place at the right time.

His family in his youth and his adult life supported him.

Lincoln had great determination to become educated.

His political ambition and experiences honed his political skills.

Writing the First Draft

If you have gone through all the steps in creating the outline, you should be ready to write, and it should be relatively easy. You have researched your topic and become an expert, and you have your outline with all the topic sentences ready to go.

I. Think About the Assignment and Your Audience

To prepare for writing, review the requirements of the assignment to make sure you focus your writing efforts on what's expected by your teacher. Consider the purpose of the paper, either as set forth in the assignment, or as stated in your thesis statement—are you trying to persuade, to inform, to evaluate, or summarize?

When thinking about the audience, you may want to keep the following questions in mind:

- Who is your audience and how will that affect your paper?
- What prior knowledge can you assume the audience has about the topic?

II. Follow Your Outline

You probably spent a lot of time on your outline. You should use it. Good writing is well-organized and planned. Be sure to follow your plan. If, for some reason, you do not feel the plan is working when you begin writing, then REVISE THE OUTLINE before you continue writing. Thinking about organization and getting sentences down on paper at the same time can be challenging. Be sure to organize and then write.

III. Have Your Notes Cards on Hand

Remember, you used your note cards to build your outline. You will need them again as you write the paper. You will need your note cards to:

- remind you about specific details you may have forgotten
- help you to know what sources to cite
- retrieve direct quotations you will use and cite

Having your note cards arranged in the order of your outline is most helpful.

IV. Cite Your Sources

Indicate the source for all information that is not your own and that is not considered common knowledge. This might be a good time to review the section on plagiarism found at the end of this guide.

Consult the Purdue OWL website for specifics about how to cite sources (in-text citations) in your paper (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>). Be sure to carefully follow MLA style for partial quotations, full quotations, indented quotations, in-text quotations, and paraphrasing.

All of the works cited in your paper must be listed on the works cited page of your paper. **Only** sources cited in your paper can be included on the works cited page.

V. Create the Works Cited Page

According to MLA style, you must have a Works Cited page at the end of your research paper. All entries in the Works Cited page must correspond to the works cited in your main text. The Works Cited page lists all of the sources you used in your paper and is placed at the end of the paper.

- Begin your Works Cited Page on a new page, with the title Works Cited centered at the top.
- The header should continue along with the page numbering.
- Double space all citations, but do not skip spaces between entries.
- List the sources in alphabetical order by the authors' last names. Ignore "A," "And," and "The" when alphabetizing by title if an author is not listed.
- Indent the second and subsequent lines of citations by 0.5 inches to create a hanging indent.
- All works cited entries end with a period.
- Do not number the citations.
- For online sources, you should include a location to show readers where you found the source. Many scholarly databases use a DOI (digital object identifier). Use a DOI in your citation if you can; otherwise use a URL. Delete "http://" from URLs. The DOI or URL is usually the last element in a citation and should be followed by a period.

Purdue Owl MLA Works Cited Directions

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>

MLA Sample Works Cited Page <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/12/>

EasyBib can help you in creating the works cited page. Please see the section titled "EasyBib – The Basics."

VI. Proofread

Proofread your paper. Read your paper out loud, to yourself. See if your points are coherent and logical when read aloud. Have several experienced people read and critique your paper. If your teacher requires you to have the signatures of proofreaders or copies of the proofread paper, be sure you retain them.

Review your proofreaders' comments. Make sure that you understand all of their corrections and recommendations. Consult with your proofreaders in person if necessary. Incorporate the changes your proofreaders indicated.

EasyBib – The Basics

Open up your web browser and type www.easybib.com into the URL box. (The default is set to MLA style.)

How to Cite a Book

- To cite a book, click on the “Book” tab in the blue box.
- Type the ISBN number into the white box and click “Cite this”.
- Choose the book that matches your title and author and click “Select”.
- If you enter an ISBN number and no results are found, click on “Cite this source manually”.
- Double-check or enter in the following information from the book.
 - Where it says “Contributors” Select Author or Editor – enter first, middle, & last name.
 - If you have two or three authors or editors, then click on “+ Add another contributor”.
 - Title
 - Publisher
 - City
 - Year
- When you have double-checked that all of the information is correct, click on “Create Citation”.
- You will see your citation at the bottom of the page.
- Click “Copy and paste citation” and paste the citation onto your works cited page.
- Check that the formatting is correct.
- Be sure to save the changes.

How to Cite a Website

- To cite a website, click on the Website tab at the top of the page in the blue box.
- Open up another web browsing session and go to the website source that you used.
- Copy the entire URL and paste it into the white box within the blue box on EasyBib and click on “Cite this”.
- Double-check or enter in the following information from the website.
 - Article Title
 - Author or Editor if there is one

- If you have two or three, then click on “+ Add another contributor”
 - Publisher/Sponsor (Usually the website name).
 - Website’s URL
 - When the website was created or last updated (sometimes it’s only a year).
 - Date that you went on the website – Day, Month, and Year.
- When you have double-checked that all of the information is correct, click on “Create Citation”.
- Your citation will be listed at the bottom of the page.
- Click “Copy and paste citation” and paste the citation onto your works cited page.
- Check that the formatting is correct.
- Be sure to save the changes.

NOTE: EasyBib offers advanced features as well as the option to have an account. You can create an account and save your citations in EasyBib if you would like.

Revising for Final Draft

After your first draft is returned to you, review all of the corrections and recommendations made by your teacher. If you do not understand any of your teacher's comments and suggestions, meet with your teacher for clarification.

Correct and revise your paper.

Have at least one reliable proofreader look at the final draft of your paper.

If your teacher or any of your proofreaders indicated that you had difficulties in any of the areas listed below, you can consult the Purdue OWL online guide for additional help.

- Mechanics <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/4/>
- Grammar <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/>
- Punctuation <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/6/>

NOTE: Many colleges and universities and some special programs for students require the submission of a graded writing sample. It is always a good idea to keep a copy of your final graded paper in case you need it for such purposes. It would be wise to scan the graded paper and save it as a pdf.

Overview of the Reflective Essay

Description

Includes:

- definition of topic
- nature of reflection
- writer's opinion or unique perspective about the topic

Body (1-3 paragraphs)

Each paragraph includes:

- topic sentence
- 2-3 supporting details

Conclusion

Includes

- what the writer learned because of this reflection
- additional "food for thought"

Reflective Essay Structure

I. Description

- Describe the topic and why it is the subject of reflection
- Thesis – writer’s unique opinion or perspective about the topic
- May be provocative
- Usually written in first person

II. Body Paragraph(s) – usually 1-2

- Each body paragraph starts with a topic sentence that connects to the topic of the reflection.
- Each body paragraph includes personal experience, opinion, or outside factors (2-4) that support the topic sentence.

III. Conclusion

- Summary of the topic
- Recap of the elements of reflection
- Food for thought – statement about how this topic may impact the writer’s future or what the writer has learned from this reflection

Reflective Essay Organizer

Topic: _____

Description

General reflection: _____

Opinion or experience that supports this reflection:

Thesis: _____

Body Paragraph 1

Topic Sentence: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Body Paragraph 2

Topic Sentence: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Body Paragraph 3

Topic Sentence: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Experience, opinion, or observation: _____

Conclusion

Restatement of the thesis (in different words): _____

Recap of main ideas: _____

“Food for Thought”: _____

Point of View

Point of view is the position the writer takes in relation to a piece of writing. In most cases, but not all, third person is the right point of view. These instructions are written in third person. Notice that the pronouns “I” and “you” are not used. Here is how the instructions would look in the first person:

Point of view is the position I take in relation to something I write. I wrote these instructions in first person. Notice that I didn’t use “you.” Here is how the instructions would look in the second person:

Point of view is the position you take in relation to something you write. In most cases, but not all, you should use third person. Do not use the second person, “you,” unless you are referring to the person who is reading your essay, as happens in the next paragraphs.

When to use first person

For some essays, first person is fine. If you are writing about an experience you had, such as a trip you took or a game in which you played, use the first person. You can also use first person if you are writing a reflective paper, such as you might in religion class, in which you present your thoughts and feelings about a subject or experience.

When to use second person and how to avoid it

Second person is rarely appropriate in an essay. Second person means that you are referring specifically to the reader, perhaps giving him or her instructions such as in the paragraph before this one and this paragraph. Those instructions are meant for you. Using the second person in the wrong circumstances can cause one to write sentences that are ridiculous. For example: “When you are a professional football player, you have a high risk of getting multiple concussions.” Your reader will never be a professional football player. Here’s one way to write that sentence correctly: “When a person is a professional football player, he has a high risk of getting multiple concussions.” Here’s another way to write it: “When one is a professional football player, one has a high risk of getting multiple concussions.” If there is more than one person, the pronoun becomes plural: “When people are professional football players, they have a high risk of getting multiple concussions.”

Changing first person to third person

For most essays, third person is the right point of view. You will find that you may write something in first person, but it can easily be made into third person. For example: "I think Abraham Lincoln was the greatest president because he held the country together through what I believe was the most profound challenge it has ever faced." That sentence should be: "Abraham Lincoln was the greatest president because he held the country together through the most profound challenge it has ever faced." There is no need for "I."

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of another person's work or ideas without acknowledging the source of those ideas of work. The ideas and work can come from an ever-growing canon of sources, including, but not limited to: electronic sources such as blogs, digital photographs, and online videos. This collective body of knowledge is called "intellectual property." Like all other forms of theft, **plagiarism is illegal, and ethically and morally wrong.** As a Catholic community, it is vital that each student at Iona recognize that plagiarism is unacceptable and will not be tolerated on any level.

Examples of Plagiarism

- Copying word for word without quotation marks (*copying three consecutive words or more without giving credit constitutes plagiarism*).
- Failure to cite the source of the material after quoting and in the list of Works Cited.
- Paraphrasing without giving the source credit (*copying three consecutive words or more without giving credit constitutes plagiarism*).
- Using key words or phrases without quotation marks or acknowledging the source of the material.
- Using an author's idea without giving credit.

Guidelines for Avoiding Plagiarism

- When you copy anything from another writer's work (including a phrase or a single word), always use quotation marks.
- Give credit to the author by citing their name and the source.
- When writing a research paper, clearly distinguish where the ideas of others end and your own comments begin. You must cite the ideas of others even if you don't copy them word for word.
- Include a Works Cited page with correctly formatted entries.

When in doubt, GIVE CREDIT to your source!