

Ventura College
Directed Learning Activity (Writing)
Designed by: Sumita Lall

Student Name: _____
Date: _____ Time: _____
Length of Session: _____
Tutor/Instructor: _____

Revising Thesis Statements , Topic Sentences , and Essay Structure

SLO: Students will be able to improve their **thesis statements**, **topic sentences**, and **essay structure** in a draft of an assigned essay. This DLA begins with an “Assignment” and ends with an “Activity,” instead of the other way around.

Objective: Global revision work allows students to see their drafts with “new eyes,” rethinking and reevaluating their work from the perspective of the reader and making changes to their work by adding, cutting, or reorganizing sentences or even entire paragraphs. Highlighting **thesis statements**, underlining **topic sentences**, and discussing **essay structure** with a tutor can help students become more objective about their work. The act of marking up a rough draft also helps students overcome their desire to “keep things neat,” and the tutor will model how to highlight, underline, draw arrows, cross words and sentences out, and write on top of lines or in the margins, thereby helping the student to develop metacognitive awareness about the writing process.

Assignment: (20 min)

The following steps of the exercise require students to work independently, and it allows students to look for **unity** and **support** in their rough drafts before working with a tutor.

- 1.) Take out your essay assignment sheet, a highlighter, and a pen or pencil. Re-read the assignment sheet carefully, **highlighting** key **verbs** like “compare/contrast,” “analyze,” “explain,” “describe,” etc., looking for specific instructions and requirements. Now, **underline** key nouns like “journal entry,” “essay,” “interpretation,” “summarize and respond,” “analysis,” etc.
- 2.) Take out your rough draft, and
 - a.) highlight your thesis statement.
 - b.) Underline your topic sentences.
- 3.) Skim the details/examples in each paragraph. Does each sentence **support** the topic sentence in your paragraph? Are any sentences off topic or hard to understand? If so, place stars next to these sentences.
- 4.) Read the concluding sentences of each paragraph: did you state the significance of each paragraph’s point (i.e. reinforce the topic sentence)?

5.) Read your concluding paragraph: did you restate or state of the significance of your essay in terms of your thesis, offer solutions to a central problem, or provoke your reader to think about your thesis in a new way?

6.) Write down ONE main concern you have about your essay:

i. _____

Write down TWO specific questions that you want to ask the writing tutor:

i. _____

ii. _____

Activity: (20 min)

The following steps of the exercise require interaction with a tutor, helping to reinforce the lesson of finding **unity** and **support** in rough drafts.

- 1.) Discuss the keywords the student **highlighted (verbs) or underlined (nouns)** on the instructor's assignment sheet.
- 2.) Invite the student to ask any questions if he/she is unclear about the assignment, and feel free to tell the student that you need to consult with the instructor if you are having trouble deciphering the instructions.
- 3.) Look at the student's rough draft, and ask the student to read his/her highlighted **thesis statement** and underlined **topic sentences**.
- 4.) Discuss whether the **thesis statement** is broad enough to accommodate the **topic sentences** and narrow enough to be supported within the confines of the required page length stated on the assignment.
- 5.) Ask the student to re-read his/her highlighted **thesis statement** and underlined **topic sentences**. Discuss whether or not the essay exhibits **unity**: do any of the topic sentences feel off-topic or out of place, is there any scattered logic or needless rambling, are all the **topic sentences** unified around the **thesis statement**?
- 6.) Discuss any sentences beside which the student placed stars in the body paragraphs (i.e. sentences that may not support each topic sentence).
- 7.) Discuss the ONE main concern the student wrote down about his/her essay.
- 8.) Answer the TWO specific questions the student asked about his/her essay.

Review: (10 min)

The following steps of the exercise require interaction with a tutor or instructor.

- 1.) Explain what you learned about **revising thesis statements and topic sentences in rough drafts** to the tutor/instructor working with you.
- 2.) How might you apply what you have learned about **essay structure** in your classes at Ventura College?

Tutor/Instructor Feedback and Reflection:

- _____ Student seemed engaged during “Activity.”
- _____ Student seemed engaged during “Assignment.”
- _____ Student completed the DLA.
- _____ Student worked well independently.
- _____ Student asked questions that clarified the assignment.
- _____ Student asked questions that helped him/her revise rough draft.

Space for notes by tutor/instructor:

