Writing Applications: Organizing a Five-Paragraph Essay

Although a five-paragraph essay will not work for every college writing situation, it will get you through many types of essays, essay exams, and other tests with essay components such as the CAHSEE. The following outline, from the Web site http://www.sheboyganfalls.k12.wi.us/staff/dehogue/FSSH/5_parag.htm provides an example of what a five-paragraph essay outline looks like.

Introductory paragraph.

A. Catches the reader’s interest
B. Gives brief background on your topic
C. Begins or ends with the thesis statement

Body (paragraphs 2, 3, etc.)

A. Develops, expands, and/or supports the thesis statement
B. Includes a topic sentence for each paragraph
C. Includes supporting details which reinforce the topic sentence.

Concluding paragraph

A. Restates the thesis or sums up the argument.
B. Tells the reader what you think is important to remember. (Often, this is a personal response).
C. Never introduce new information in the conclusion. Extend your thinking on something from the essay.

1. For the following general topics, develop a strong thesis statement.
   - Capital punishment
   - Smoking
   - School violence

2. Before reviewing your thesis statements with an instructor or tutor, use the space below to write any questions you still have:
3. Once you have reviewed your thesis statements with an instructor or tutor, develop a five-paragraph essay outline for one of the thesis statements you wrote. Be sure to include a sentence at the beginning of each body paragraph that states the main idea of that paragraph (topic sentence) and list any potential supporting details you might present. Remember, this is just an outline, like the one listed above, and should NOT be written in paragraph format.

4. Review your outline with an instructor or tutor in the WRC, and see if the instructor or tutor has anything to add to improve your outline. Then, have that person sign and date this sheet.

________________________________________________________________________

Instructor/Tutor signature

________________________________________________________________________

Date

5. Return this completed, signed sheet to your instructor.