

Practice Technique 18 – Write an Opinion Essay

Steps

- 1. Read the background and the two positions.** Read (don't just skim) the background paragraph. Then read both position statements while “mentally weighing” each against the other.
- 2. Select your position.** Choose either position A or position B. Choose the position you believe you can support the easiest and the best. Clearly state you are choosing either “A” or “B” for your position.
- 3. Rewrite (or, restate) the background using your own words.** This introduction to your opinion essay should essentially “repeat” the background – but stated in a slightly different way. Ways to change the background around a little include:
 - (i) Simplifying long sentences into smaller sentences;
 - (ii) Changing some of the important words into synonyms which convey the same thing but using different expressions;
 - (iii) Restructuring the background paragraph to place information from the end more toward the middle or front of the paragraph.
- 4. Include a “restated” form of the position you choose into your introductory paragraph.** The position (A, or B) you choose should be included-with the introductory paragraph. Your introductory paragraph needs to provide the background ALONG WITH a summarized version of your position.
- 5. Brainstorm for supporting reasons of your position.** There are dozens of good ways to brainstorm for ideas. Some of these ways work better for different people. Find a few ways that work well for you. Some suggestions include:
 - (i) Quickly jot down the initial reasons why you chose the position you picked. Many times, those first few thoughts will be your best thoughts. Jot down enough of this so you won't forget them when you need to select the best reasons.
 - (ii) Look at the other position and think through why you did NOT choose it. Quickly jot those reasons down also. You may want to include these in your document to explain why the other idea is not as good as your position.
 - (iii) Imagine what someone choosing the other position would say about the opposing view. Come up with a rebuttal to that reason.
 - (iv) Re-read the original background paragraph and think of a third way someone might form an opinion or position that is different from positions A and B. Consider how you can “weave” that thinking into the position you have chosen.

(v) Sketch a Venn diagram of the two positions. Identify what is similar and different – going a bit deeper than might be obvious at first glance. Allow this to help you “see” why your position makes more sense than the other position.

6. **Write a clearly stated “headline” sentence for each of your best three supporting ideas.** Written well, these three headline sentences will guide you in filling-in the rest of the body of your opinion essay.
7. **Fill-in the rest of the body.** Write a full paragraph (or, more) beneath each of the three headline sentences. These paragraphs should add support to your “reasons” – and if appropriate, give rational to why the other position is a lesser choice.
8. **Finish with a conclusion.** The conclusion or summary should be a more simply stated repeat of your introductory paragraph – emphasizing the position you have chosen. Then include a slight restatement of each headline sentence as support for why your opinion is better than the alternative.

Practice the Technique

On a separate sheet of paper, perform steps 1 through 8 as described above for this scenario.

Background: Rock music and country music are actually more alike than many people realize. They both have similar roots, and one of the earliest forms of rock music came from a combination of country music and rhythm and blues. Both types of music have similar rhythms and instrumentation, and it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish a country song from a rock song. Still, there are differences between the two genres, something that fans of both genres will be quick to point out.

Position A: The easiest way to distinguish a country song from a popular rock song is by the lyrics in the song.

Position B: The easiest way to distinguish a country song from a popular rock song is by the instrumentation and rhythm of the song.

Discuss your work with the class, in a small group, or with your instructor as you progress through each of the eight steps.