

Essay Writing

A Step By Step Guide

Possible ways to introduce a topic

1. Giving **background or historical information**.
2. **Defining terms or concepts** needed to understand the topic.
3. **Drawing a connection** between the reader and the topic. (*Why does the reader care about this topic? Why is this topic important to write/read about?*)
4. Any **preliminary information** that the reader might need to know in order to understand the essay.

Example 1: Background or Historical Information

Topic: Identity Theft

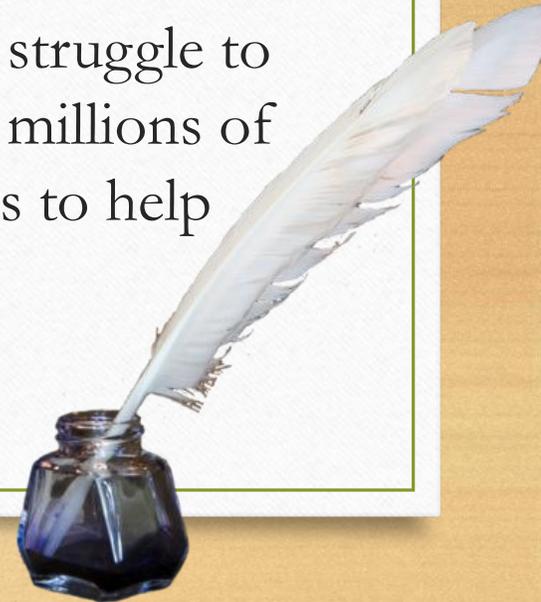


Identity theft is not a new crime. Throughout history, unscrupulous individuals have pretended to be people they are not, often with the goal of political, social, or financial gain. With the right appearance, people have falsely presented themselves as kings and bishops. Today, in the information age, identity theft is a far more common problem. With access to names, Social Security numbers, and other personal information, thieves are able to steal identities, leaving the victims struggling to clear their good names. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.

Example 2: Defining terms or concepts

Topic: Identity Theft

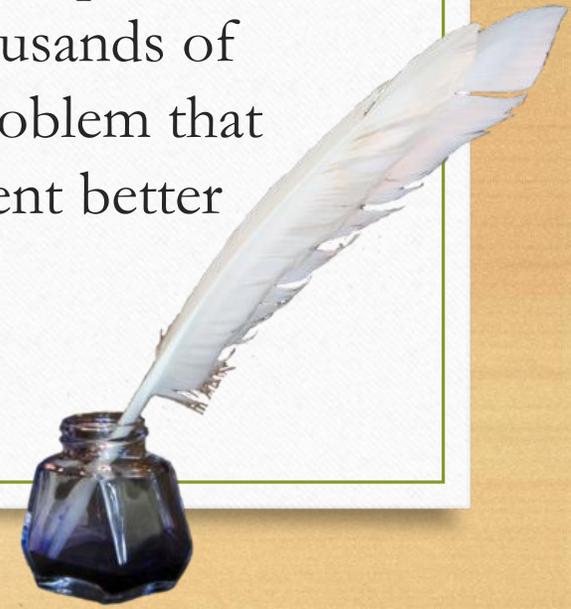
Identity is what makes a person unique. It is "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual," (source 1). When one is a victim of identity theft, it is this "distinguishing character" that is stolen: one's name, address, Social Security number, employment history, credit history, and more. It therefore is no wonder that victims of identity theft often feel a deep sense of violation as they struggle to reclaim their good names. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.



Example 3: Drawing a connection

Topic: Identity Theft

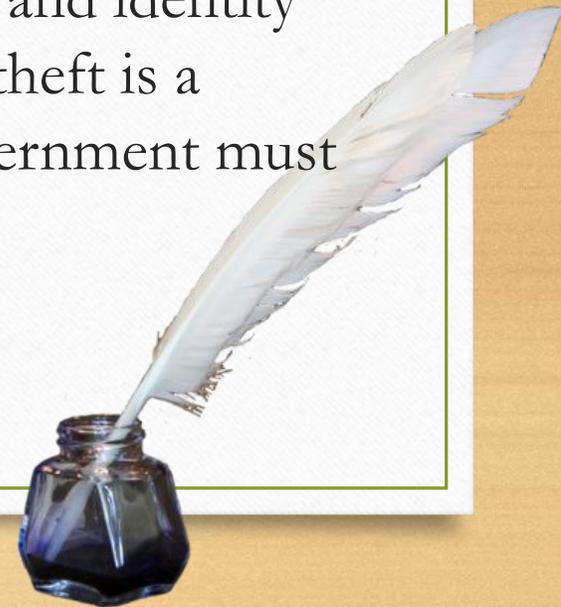
How would you feel if you knew, at this moment, that some criminal is writing your name, address, and Social Security number on credit card applications and plans to charge thousands of dollars worth of merchandise on those credit cards? More importantly, how do you know that this is not happening? Millions of people have become victims of identity theft, and they often find out only after thousands of dollars have been stolen using their names. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.



EXAMPLE 4: PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Topic: Identity Theft

Identity fraud is the fastest growing crime in the United States. In 2004, over nine million Americans, or approximately one person in 24, became victims of identity fraud or identity theft, at a cost to the economy of 52.6 billion dollars ("2005 Identity Fraud Survey Report"). Because many cases of identity fraud and identity theft may go unreported, the numbers could be even higher. Identity theft is a serious problem that claims millions of innocent victims, and the government must implement better regulations to help put an end to this crime.



The body

The body of the essay is where you will explain your ideas and support your main thesis (controlling idea/claim).

-Excellent essays will have as little as two body paragraphs, but can go on to have 4 or 5 or more paragraphs.

-The number of paragraphs depends on the topic, the argument you are trying to make about the topic, and how you are organizing your ideas.

The body should be *long enough* to support the main thesis/claim to fulfill the purpose of the essay.

Guidelines for a body paragraph



- Each body paragraph should contain only one main idea, stated as the topic sentence of that paragraph. This main idea needs to be explained **completely** before moving on to evidence and examples.
- Each paragraph should contain supporting evidence.
 - Evidence can be in the form of **examples**, but these must be explained completely as well, and **must not replace explanation** of the main idea.
 - Evidence can be in the form of **logic**, but it must be logic the reader can follow and it must be **strong, sound logic**. In fact, if the logic is strong, it is a great way to support a claim.
 - Transitions from one paragraph to the next create a harmonious flow.

Elaboration

- Citing text evidence alone is not enough.
- You must explain why that evidence matters.

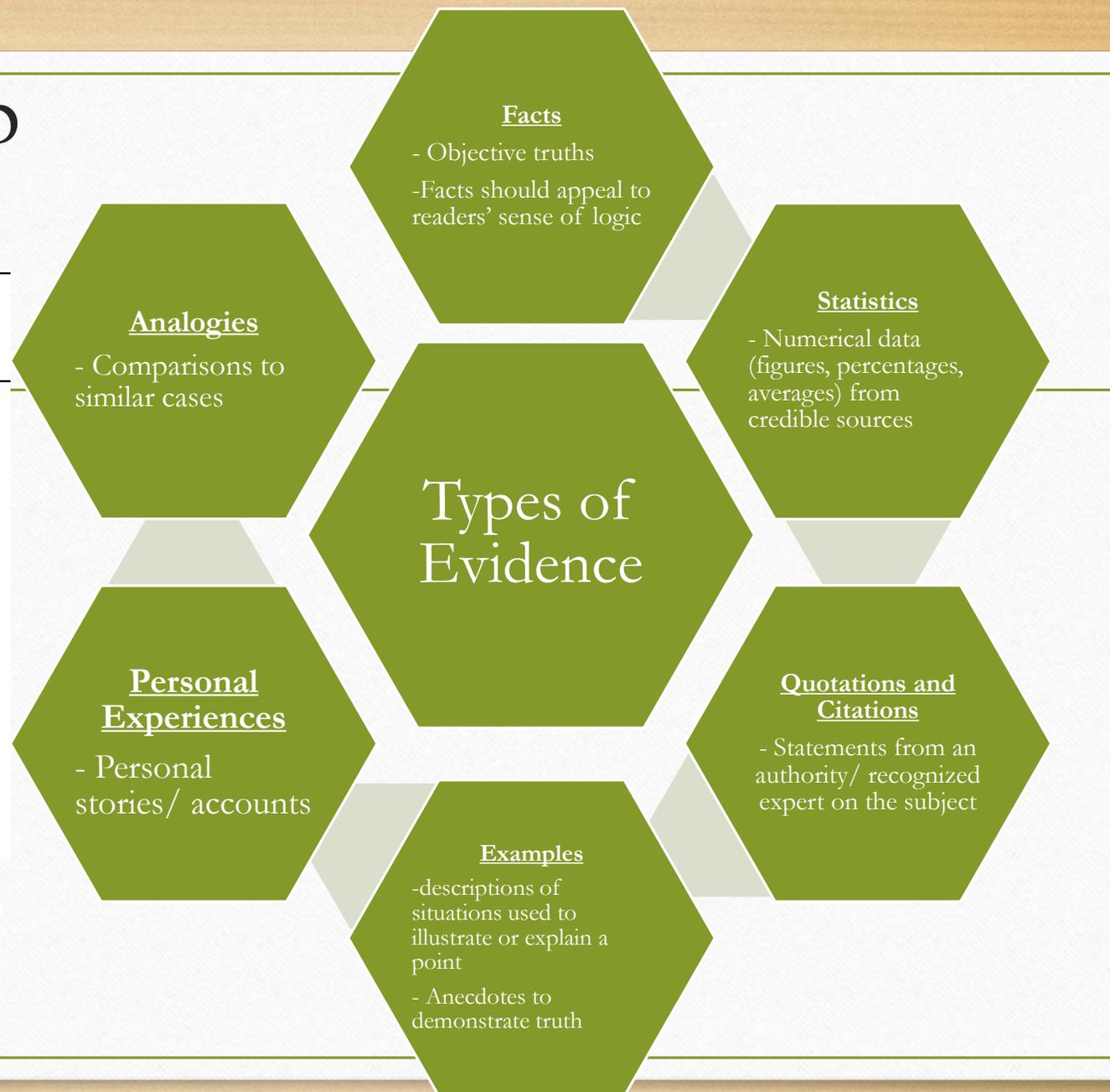
In 2004, over nine million Americans, or approximately one person in 24, became victims of identity fraud or identity theft, at a cost to the economy of 52.6 billion dollars ("2005 Identity Fraud Survey Report"). This shows not only how common identify theft is, but the profound impact that this crime is having on the economy. An identity thief may steal a person's identity and open a credit card account in that person's name, making hundreds or even thousands of dollars in purchases. Once the fraud is discovered, the money is automatically returned to the credit card company, meaning that the businesses loses that money. Their merchandise and their profit are gone, just as if someone had walked into the store and shoplifted it. This hurts business owners and the economy as a whole.

Let's recap

Evidence and Elaboration (4-point Rubric)

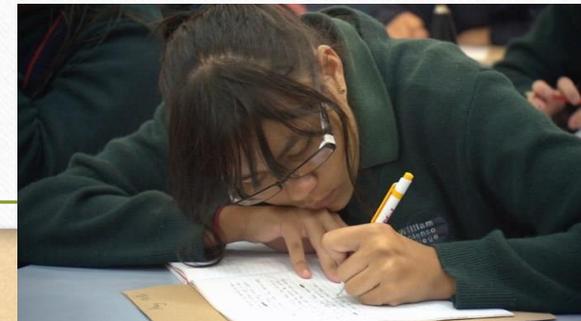
The response provides thorough, convincing, and credible support, citing evidence for the writer's claim that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details. The response includes most of the following:

- Smoothly integrated, thorough, and relevant evidence, including precise references to sources
- Effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques to support the claim, demonstrating an understanding of the topic and text
- Clear and effective expression of ideas, using precise language
- Academic and domain-specific vocabulary clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose
- Varied sentence structure, demonstrating language facility



Reread to Organize ideas

- Ideas must be organized in an order that makes sense.
- Even when the information is not chronological, there is a logical order for information to be released.
- Students must be taught to pay attention to what ideas need to be said before certain other ideas, so that those subsequent ideas make sense.
- The best way to make this happen is through **PLANNING!**



PURPOSE OF THE CONCLUSION

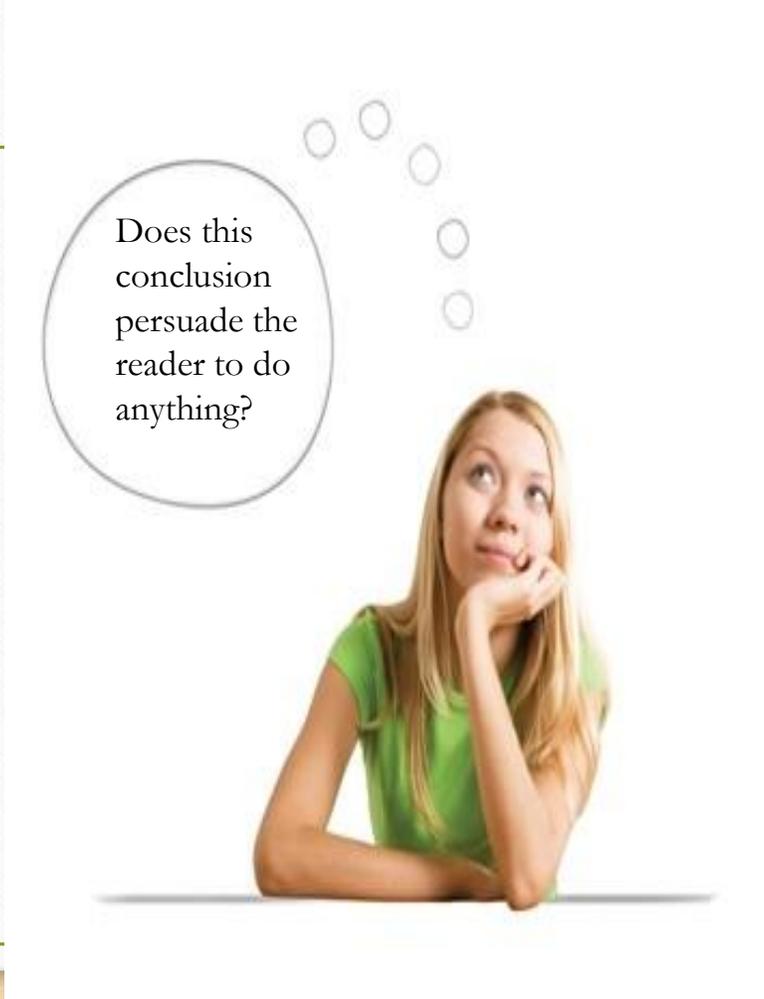
- As with introductions, conclusions should not simply be a summary of what we just read.
- The purpose of a conclusions is to draw final decisions about the topic.
- Conclusions should serve as a form of wrap up.



An Ineffective Conclusion

Topic: yay or nay for homework
in high school

I have given you three truthful explanations of why daily homework is an abomination to the high school. This is due to problems with participants in afterschool events, the time we spend with our families, and our jobs. Thank you for allowing me to express my feelings.



Does this
conclusion
persuade the
reader to do
anything?