

STAAR

Writing Guide

7th grade



Name: _____

The Expository Essay!

- Remember the **EXPOSITORY** will ask you to **EXPLAIN**!
- **Ask to have the prompt read if you are confused about what it is asking!**
Having someone read it out loud might help you figure out what it is asking. If you are still confused, use a dictionary to help you determine the meaning of any words you don't know.

The **Expository** essay should:

- Have an **INTRODUCTION** that:
 - Has a **hook** that grabs the reader's attention.
 - Start with a *quote*, an *intriguing question*, a *startling statement*, a *definition*, a *strong opinion*, a *list*, etc.
 - Answers the prompt with your controlling idea (**THESIS**).
Example: Taking responsibility for your actions is important because it shows that you are mature and someone to be trusted.
- Have **BODY** paragraphs that:
 - Give reasons why your opinion is right.
 - Explain your reasons. Use People @ HEB examples!
Example: People who do not take responsibility for their actions are seen as untrustworthy and lose the respect of those around them. For example, many people lost respect for Lance Armstrong after it came out that he was lying about cheating. He lost many endorsements and the respect of his peers and fans.
- Have a **CONCLUSION** paragraph that:
 - Restates your opinion and reasons in a **meaningful** and **memorable** way!
Example: Being accountable for your actions is important, and not just for children. People who take responsibility for their actions are people who are trusted. They are the people we all want to associate with. That's why being responsible is important.

**Don't forget to use
TRANSITION
words!**

Name: _____



Tricks to the Multiple Choice Test

- **Double check any answers that have that, it, he, she, they (it could be a comma splice and therefore WRONG!)**
 - *For more than 20 years, sailors have competed in a race called Around Along, it is a boat race.* (comma splice/this should be a semicolon)
- Remember, **usually** an answer with two periods is wrong.
 - *A boy who wanted to become a knight started training. When he was as young as seven.*
- Answers with repetitive information are usually wrong.
 - *Burton, he wanted to try out for basketball.*
- Remember sentences should **not** begin with **AND**.
- **Usually pick a more “specific” answer.** Example:
Change *he* to *James* or Change *very tired* to *exhausted*

**** Always, always, ALWAYS double check your bubbling!**

Combining/Revising Sentences

Questions that ask about combining or revising sentences, are really asking if you can recognize a well written sentence.

Sentences are complete thoughts that **MUST** have a subject and a verb. (They tell us who/what and what they did/are).

Ex:

I walked. (noun and verb – sentence)

She is an excellent student. (noun and verb – sentence)

*******A sentence that begins with one of the follow words and DOES NOT have a comma with another noun or verb after it, is NOT a sentence!**

To	After	Although	As	When/Whenever	While
Until	Because	Before	If	Since	During

Combining or revising sentence questions usually are worded: *What is the most effective way to combine sentences ____ and ____?* or *What is the best way to revise sentence _____?*

Example:

(1) At home in bed, I tried to think of a way to help. (2) Then it hit me—Kelly knew the lines as well as I did. (3) I called Mrs. Dermitt to give her my suggestion. (4) Within a few short hours, Kelly stood onstage in costume and makeup. (5) She gave a spectacular performance. (6) The crowd laughed and cheered as she spoke witty lines she had rehearsed with me so many times. (7) In a strange turn of events, Kelly and I had saved the day for everyone by working as a team. (8) Of course, I was terribly disappointed to have missed my chance in the spotlight. (9) But incredibly grateful to have such a good friend.

What is the most effective way to combine sentences 8 and 9?

- F** I was terribly disappointed, of course, and incredibly grateful to have missed my chance in the spotlight and to have such a good friend.
- G** Of course, being terribly disappointed to have missed my chance in the spotlight, but incredibly grateful to have such a good friend.
- H** Of course, I was terribly disappointed to have missed my chance in the spotlight, but I was incredibly grateful to have such a good friend.
- J** I was terribly disappointed to have missed my chance in the spotlight, of course, I was incredibly grateful to have such a good friend.

Adding/Deleting Sentences

There are usually 3 to 4 questions a test which ask either:

Which sentence does NOT belong in this paper? or Which sentence could BEST follow ...?

Deleting: For “*Which sentence does NOT belong...*” questions:

1. Read the paragraph which contains the sentence.
2. Determine the main idea of the paragraph.
3. Determine which of the 4 choices does not follow the main idea.

Example: Which sentence does NOT belong?: _____

(1) Several witnesses took photos or shot video of mysterious lights seen in the Arizona night sky March 13, 1997. (2) Some witnesses were even interviewed on national television. (3) Stories of unidentified flying objects were flying around Arizona like rockets. (4) Could it have been little green men? (5) My uncle lives in Phoenix, but he didn't see them. (6) To this day, many people are convinced that these were the lights from visiting spaceships. (7) They believe that because the event was seen by so many people, there could be no other explanation.

Adding For “*Which sentence could BEST follow sentence...*”

1. Read the paragraph which contains the sentence.
2. Focus on the sentence mentioned in the question & the sentence that comes directly after it.
3. Determine which of the answer choices follows the main idea and fits between the two sentences. That is your answer.

Example:

(1) Each search team consists of a trained dog and a human handler. (2) The dogs chosen for training must have certain characteristics. (3) A shy dog, or one that is easily upset by loud noises and crowds, would not cope well with the commotion that surrounds catastrophes. (4) Adult dogs are best because their personalities are already developed. (5) Volunteers can often find dogs with these characteristics at animal shelters. (6) After being selected, a training period that can last up to three years is what the dog goes through.

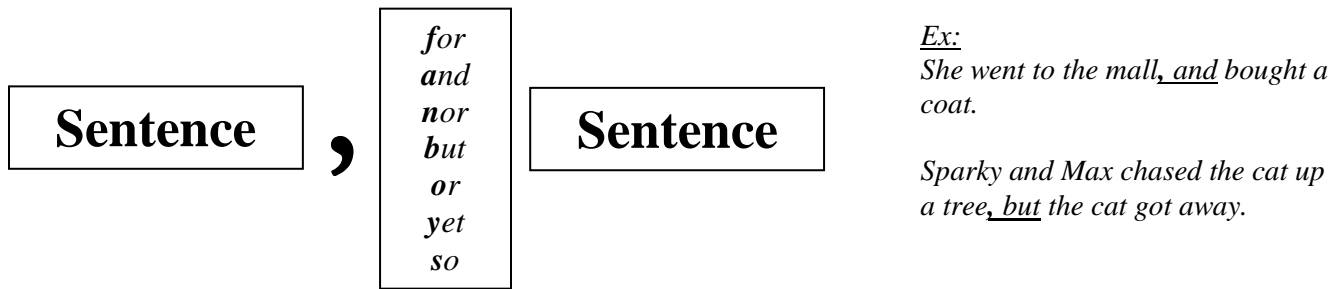
Andrew wants to add a sentence following sentence 2. Which sentence could he add that would most logically follow sentence 2?

- A These animals need to be energetic, determined, and eager to hunt and fetch.
- B Any well-behaved dog can become a good rescue dog.
- C In most cases the dogs are quiet and prefer calm surroundings.
- D The dogs selected have particular qualities and behaviors.

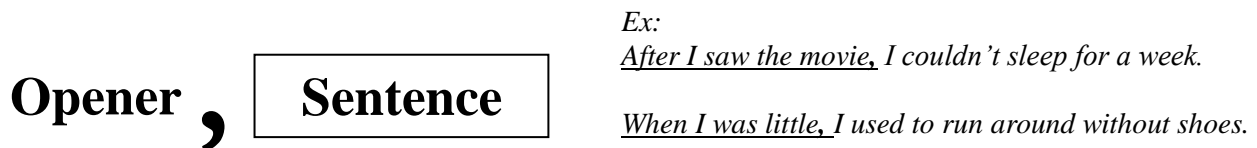
Commas (,) are used for a variety of reasons:

1. To separate three or more items in a _____. *Ex: She bought **books, papers, and pencils.***

2. With a conjunction to _____ two sentences.



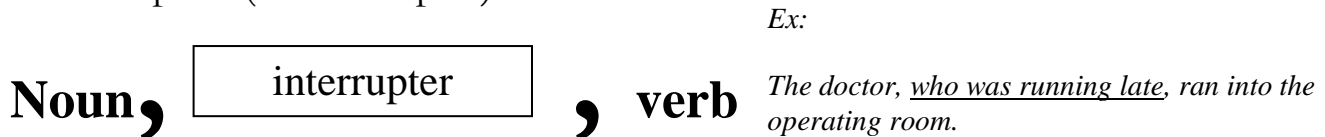
3. To separate an opening phrase or word from the rest of the sentence:



4. With **quotations**: to separate the quote from the rest of the sentence.

*Ex: "James," mother yelled, "it's time for school!"
Sally said, "Let's go to the park."*

5. To separate any extra information in a sentence that if taken out, the sentence will still be complete (an interrupter):



****** Two sentences joined **ONLY** with a comma (not a comma and a conjunction) make a COMMA SPLICE and therefore, **WRONG!** Use a **SEMI-COLON** instead.

*Ex: My mother was right, I should listen to her more often. **WRONG!** ☹*

*My mother was right; I should listen to her more often. **RIGHT!** ☺*

Comma Practice

Directions: Edit the following sentences for correct comma or semi-colon use.

1. Morton Ranch Junior High, on the north side of I-10 is the school I attend.
2. Accepting responsibility for your actions is important because it makes you more trustworthy keeps you from getting in greater trouble and helps you be a better person.
3. When I go to the park I always bring my dogs.
4. I needed to study for the test, if I didn't pass I would fail math.

Quotation Marks “ ”

Quotation marks are used to show when someone is talking.



- **Quotation marks** always come in pairs.
- The **punctuation mark** comes before the quotation mark.
- Start a new paragraph every time you switch speakers.
- Use a capital letter for the first word of a sentence inside quotation marks.

Example:

“Jonathon, how are you doing?” asked Melissa.

“Not too well,” replied Jonathon. “I have a headache and really wish I had stayed home.”

Melissa responded, “Why don’t you go to the nurse?”

Rewrite the story below using correct punctuation and paragraphing:

I hate running exclaimed Jeremy. Me too moaned Sally as she shuffled onto the track. Just then the coach blew his whistle and shouted go.

Apostrophes

'are used in **contractions** and to show possession.

Contractions are when two words have been joined together. The **apostrophe** replaces the missing letters.

Examples: they are – they're I have – I've where is – where's

1. _____ (It is) time for lunch.
2. _____ (Is not) she a student at Morton Ranch Junior High.
3. I _____ (have not) done my homework.

A **possessive noun** shows **ownership** and is done with either an 's or '.

- Use an 's for singular nouns.

Examples: a child's books. Robert's coat the kitten's food.

- Just an (') is added if the noun is plural and ends in s.

two dogs' tracks the campers' tent the students' pencils

1. (Mr. Smith) _____ dogs are in the backyard.
2. (Velma) _____ twin sisters attend preschool.
3. The (candidates) _____ speeches were brief.

Homonyms

are words that sound the same, are spelled differently, and mean different things.

there = _____ (I set my books there.)

their = _____ (Did you see their car?)

they're = contraction of _____ (They're going to school.) Use if you can replace the word with they are and the sentence still makes sense.

your = _____ (I have your books)

you're = contraction of _____ (You're talking too loud.) Use if you can replace the word with you are and the sentence still makes sense.

HOMONYMS continued...

its = _____ (The dog ate its food.)

it's = _____ (It's time to go home.) Use if you can replace the word with it is. (There has ALWAYS been an it's/its question on the TAKS test – so there might be one on the STAAR; memorize this one!)

Capitalization

- Capitalize names of continents, countries, states, cities, parks, and neighborhoods. *Mexico, New York, Tulsa, Lakes of Bridgewater*
- Capitalize the pronoun I. *Tomorrow I am going to the zoo.*
- Capitalize a person's title: *Dr., Mrs., Ms., Mr., etc.*
- Capitalize the first letter of names of people, organizations and specific places: *Ms. Taylor, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Morton Ranch Junior High*
- Capitalize the title of a movie, book, TV show, poem, etc. **Do NOT capitalize small words such as the or at which are in the middle of a title.: *The King and I.***
- Capitalize initials. *H.G. Wells*
- Capitalize the months, days of the week, and specific holidays. *January, Monday, Valentine's Day.*
- Capitalize nationalities and languages: *Hispanic, Spanish, English*
- ***And, of course, the first letter of the first word in a sentence!***

Practice:

1. mother and i bought the groceries.

2. the capital of switzerland is berne.

3. we went to calcutta last december.

4. dr. jones came home yesterday.

5. washington and new york are two cities in united states of america.

Transitions:

Transitions are words or phrases that help papers read more smoothly. These questions usually read:

What transition word or phrase could BEST be added to the beginning of...?

To answer a transition question, you must determine how the sentence changes the paper. Is it a switch in time, order, what is being said, adding details, explaining similarities, etc. Below are some transitions and in which situation they are used.

Change in time or sequence

then	formerly	in the past	in the future	afterward
finally	suddenly	meanwhile	now	previously

To show contrast/opposite (or a change in what is being said)

in contrast	but	However	on the other hand	although
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To show how something is similar

similarly	in the same way	as well as	just as	likewise
also	in a similar manner			

To explain or add more detail

for example	to illustrate	to explain	in fact
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To show a cause/effect relationship (why something happened)

because	as a result	Since	consequently	therefore
for this	accordingly	Thus		

To conclude

finally	in conclusion	in summary	therefore
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Example question:

(1) Preparation for the play moved at a rapid pace. (2) Kelly worked hard with the set crew, but she also spent hours helping me learn my lines. (3) I noticed she often said my lines with me by silently moving her lips. (4) We joked that she could probably play my part as well as I could.

What transition should be added to the beginning of sentence 3?

- F First,
- G Before that,
- H In contrast,
- J In fact,