

Personal Essay

Introduction:

- ◆ Begin with a strong statement, or question, that appeals to the reader's interest.
- ◆ You may want to use an interesting quote or statistic...
- ◆ Introduce the topic of your essay (THESIS).
- ◆ Introduce your arguments.

Development:

- ◆ Indicate what the paragraph is about immediately (first sentence).
- ◆ Use example, talk of a personal experience, or tell an anecdote to support your argument.
- ◆ Conclude by restating your argument.
- ★ Don't forget to use transitions when going from your first argument to the second, second to the third, and so on...

Conclusion:

- ◆ Restate the topic of your essay (THESIS).
- ◆ Restate your arguments.
- ◆ Be sure to summarize or express your opinion.
- ★ Finish with a strong statement; do not ask a generic, over-used question!

Important:

- ☐ In a personal essay, the use of contractions, informal language, and "I" are acceptable.

A Look at the Future

In the year 2000, technology will dominate our lives so that even everyday events are almost unrecognizable. For one thing, the mornings begin in a different way. There aren't any alarm clocks anymore. Instead, a special device wakes me up by shaking me out of bed and onto the floor. The closet door opens automatically, and the exercise equipment rolls out. At the same time, the Robot-Cook begins heating the food pellets for breakfast. I am almost ready to leave for work.

(Gerry's personal essay has a different purpose - to tell his readers how he feels about something.)

Getting to work is very easy. No one needs a car. Right outside the door is a moving walkway that takes me to a solar-powered transporter. It travels through the tubes that connect all the buildings in this area and stops right at my office. I open the door and step into a soundproof room filled with computer terminals.

(The descriptions are filled with details. The language is not obviously emotional.)

I have the same job as everyone else I know. I feed information into a huge computer that runs the city. Nobody likes this work, but there are no other kinds

of jobs anymore. Fortunately, though, we only have to work for four hours a day, and then we can do what we want.

Some nights we ride the monorail around the mall to look at the lifelike robots that demonstrate the sports equipment. On weekends we go to synthesizer concerts. There aren't any live musicians, but we see 3-D videos while we listen to the music. Sometimes, though, what I like best is just to go home and spend the evening reading. I don't turn on any machines. I just read from a real book, not a computer.

(Gerry uses the first person, instead of the "editorial we" throughout.)

It will be hard to get away from machines in the year 2000. Technology will make life easier, but it will also make life more artificial. People will never have to cook a meal, get wet when it rains, or drive in traffic jams. On the other hand, people will never have a chance to taste fresh strawberries, hear a live concert, or even drive their own cars. By taking care of everything for everybody, technology will take away our chance to enjoy life directly.

(In his concluding paragraph Gerry uses dramatic images - "tasting fresh strawberries" - to show how strongly he feels. He has not asked us to change our minds about the future, just to understand how he feels. He succeeds.

Jumping in to Marriage Too Soon

When people are young and in love, I do not think they fully realize the work that must be done to make a marriage last. It is said "a marriage may be 'made in heaven,' but the maintenance must be done on earth". Couples must constantly be thinking about their mate and that what they do always influences the marriage, in one way or another. I, for one, did not really understand what it took to keep a marriage going. Marriages must be cultivated and worked at, just like a garden, to keep them fruitful and lasting.

When I was nineteen, I got married for the first time. I was, or so I thought, totally in love with my new husband of twenty-one. I moved from San Jose, California, to Detroit, Michigan, to be with him as he was from there. I had no experience in cooking or cleaning as my mother took care of those things while I was growing up. When I got married it was such a shock to realize how much work went into those things. It was so bad that I did not even know how to boil water. My poor husband also did not fully realize that I had absolutely no experience in the kitchen or in the house. The first time I tried to cook, it was a disaster. I remember I cooked tacos, rice, and beans. Everything was burnt or under-cooked. I did not even know how to mop a floor or clean a bathroom. Those first few months were such an adjustment for us both.

My husband also had some adjustments to deal with. He had been living at home, just as I had, and had been able to spend all of his paycheck on himself. He had no one to answer for but himself. He now had to start paying bills, rent, and car notes. He also had to give me money to buy groceries. The first paycheck he gave me when we were first married was so difficult for him. He now could not buy the types of clothes and shoes that he was used to buying for himself. He had to start thinking of me too. It hurt him so much to hand over his money to me and not get the types of things he wanted and was used to getting.

We also had well-meaning family to contend with. Everyone it seemed had an opinion as to how a marriage should work. Both of our parents were from the era that men went out and worked and women stayed at home. Consequently, that was how we thought things should be also. Unfortunately, our bills and his lifestyle prevented us from doing that for long. I finally had to go

to work. I found a job working full-time as a secretary and he was already working full-time as a firefighter for the city of Detroit. Soon, we were so busy working that we stopped communicating. To me that was the beginning of the end.

We continued our life like that for seven years. In the meantime, we had three children also to deal with. We got into a rut. Go to work, come home, cook for the kids, then go to bed. Once the kids were in school, we helped them with their homework after dinner. But, we were really not talking and dealing with each other. It was the basic things, dealing with the kids or paying the bills. Once in a while, things seemed to go back to the way they were and we had a good time and seemed to really be in love again. Both of us realized though, that we had never been in love in the first place; it had been infatuation.

Unfortunately, it seems that's how it goes for a lot of young couples nowadays. They think they are in love, but it is really infatuation. They do not realize that marriage is work and if they really do not love and understand the other person, they are going to have problems. It is never going to last for the long haul. I know mine didn't and that is what is so sad. Oftentimes, it is the children who are the ones to suffer when things do not work out. I think that marriage is a job and it must be worked at continually to make it last and be satisfying.

The Value of Good Friendship

Encountering a good friend can be quite difficult in the contemporary lives of teenagers. They experience an immense amount of worries and problems throughout the day, that being a good friend is one of their last priorities. I, myself, was once baffled by what the definition of a "good" friend was, until I discovered a single step that if taken would make you the greatest friend there is.

Willingness. That is all it takes in order to be considered a good friend. If you lack will, there is a diminutive chance of you being able to be a good friend. Willingness must come from within. Listening is the most essential part of a friendship; you must be willing to stay for long hours listening to what they have to say, even if it's not the most exciting thing in the world to hear. Listening to your friend makes them feel important, special, wanted. It also allows them to exhale their problems and worries, and not keep them all bottled up.

Although listening makes up most of what a good friend is, there are also other things that form a good friend. The will to sacrifice for your friend will also take you a step closer to being a good friend. For instance, you planned your entire night, but as you're about to leave to enjoy your Saturday night with your boyfriend/girlfriend, your best friend calls you right when you're stepping out, hysterical because something bad had occurred in their life. You must be willing to sacrifice your Saturday night you had so carefully planned out and go to your friend's house and converse with them about the situation and try to console them in any way that you can. Doing this demonstrates that you are willing to be there for him/her in their time of need and sacrifice whatever you had planned.

In addition to sacrifice, you must always be willing to give advice to your friend. For example, say your friend is in a situation and they do not know what to do. They turn to you for help; you must be willing to think things through with them and try to give them the best advice. I once experienced something similar to this; I had turned to a friend for advice because I had failed a major test and did not know whether I should notify my parents or not. My "good" friend,

instead of trying to help me out and console me, said “don’t show it to your parents, that’s just stupid.” After I took my friend’s “great” advice I realized that her advice was the worst to take. My parents received a call from my teacher telling them about the grade she had given me. They were extremely unhappy and said if I had told them they would have been a little more understanding. My “good” friend was not willing to stay and try to help me out with my problem; she’d rather go out and not have to listen to what I had to say. This is when I discovered the one single step to being a good friend. The willingness to care is also a big must in being a good friend. If you don’t care for your friend then your friend won’t care for you, and the whole point of you trying to be a good friend will diminish. You must care about how your friend feels and what she’s experiencing. Caring is one of the best things you can do, because when your friend is in their time of need and the whole world seems to be turned against them, you must be the one to care and make them see that it’s not over yet.

Nobody ever said being a good friend was going to be easy, but if you want to be a good friend then you must be willing to listen, sacrifice, give advice, and care for your friend. These skills will come in handy if you really want to be a good friend. In the long run these skills will not only help you to be a good friend but also to be good to yourself and to others. You will be the type of person others can call and depend on in their time of need.