

## 21W.011/Walsh      WRITING TIPS: ESSAY 1

**1. Introductions:** Good introductions engage readers. Some pieces begin very effectively by starting **in the middle** of an experience; include enough orienting information so readers can follow the movement of thought.

Some writers craft “framing introductions,” setting the narrative immediately in context. With this approach, a creative frame is best. Avoid: “I will tell you a (sad, funny) story.” Let emotion emerge from the narrative and weave in your commentary. Framing introductions can begin in the present and flash back or start with an issue. Remember to focus on your development of ethical or social awareness. Think about the difference between “**you then**” (when the experience occurred) and “**you now.**”

**2. Proportionality and Focus:** In narrating one experience, identify the part of that experience that seems central. Allocate the most space in the narrative to that central aspect. Slow down narration of the most significant part of your experience. Concentrate on both the observable aspects (what does this experience look like?) and inner emotions (how does it feel?) In narrating more than one experience, be sure that the space allocated to each experience is proportional to its meaning.

**3. Intro/Conclusions;** Check the “bookends” of intro/conclusion. How does the conclusion show the movement of thought within the essay? Watch clichés in the conclusion. Feel free to end in experience, as long as you weave a larger meaning into it. Avoid “preachy” or didactic endings.

**4. Sources:** For the revision, you need two secondary sources. If you make a claim in the first version that needs evidence (e.g., “Homelessness is on the rise in the U.S.”), you should provide recent statistics from a reliable source and a citation in the revision. You can use any citation style in *Easy Writer*; MLA is preferred. Don’t worry about correctness of citation style in the first version; we will address this in preparing for revision. In class, we will discuss some creative ways to incorporate secondary sources into experiential writing.

**5. Sentence-level Editing:** Vary your sentence length and structure; avoid repetition in word usage. Try for dynamic topic sentences in each paragraph. Change at least 50% of “being” verbs (any form of the verb “to be”) to action verbs; (b) passive voice to active voice. This strategy usually results in clearer, more powerful, direct prose. Watch for correct use of commas and semi-colons!

**6. DO NOT USE Microsoft Word grammar checker!** The program makes consistent and serious errors. If you have usage questions, consult *Easy Writer* or the instructor.

**7. Writing Aids:** Use a thesaurus and dictionary when you write.

**8. Visual Images:** Consider including photographs in the first version or revision (obviously adjusting for page length!)

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