Writing a Successful Paper:

*Topic Sentences, Clincher Sentences, and Using Quotes*

Topic Sentences

1. The first sentence of a BODY paragraph that tells the reader what your paragraph is going to be about.

* Is not a quote
* Is not a question

2. Steps to making a great topic sentence:

1. Decide what your paragraph is going to be about
2. Write your topic sentence based on step 1
3. Write your entire paragraph
4. Once you are complete, re-read your paragraph and ask:
   1. What is my paragraph about?
   2. Does my topic sentence tell EXACTLY what my paragraph is about?
      1. If so, you have a good topic sentence.
      2. If you have more in your paragraph than what the topic sentence says, you need to either remove the extra items from your paragraph or alter your topic sentence to include these extra elements.
      3. If you have less in your paragraph than what your topic sentence says, you need to add material or alter your topic sentence to reflect what the paragraph is about.

3*. Example 1*: Writing a paragraph on how the Xbox 360 is better than the PS3. This paragraph is going to be about how the Xbox 360 has better online play than the PS3.

* One reason the Xbox 360 is a better system than the PS3 is because of its superior online gaming experience.

4. *Example 2*: Writing a paragraph on the characterization of Walter Mitty. The paragraph is about how he is a round and static character.

* Walter Mitty is a round and static character because he is fully developed and he does not change from the beginning to the end of the story.

Clincher Sentences

1. The last sentence of a BODY paragraph that tells what your paragraph was about and ties up all loose ends.

* Is not a quote
* Is not an explanation of a quote
* Is not a question

2. Steps to making a great clincher sentence:

1. Write your paragraph, including a topic sentence and a quote
2. Identify what the paragraph was about
3. Write a concluding sentence that shows the reader that everything that you have just stated leads to what you are attempting to portray in the essay
4. If possible, use a dependent clause to make a final conclusion at the end of the paragraph:
   1. Because
   2. As a result
   3. Since
   4. Due to
   5. If
   6. Although

3. *Example 1*: Writing a paragraph on how the Xbox 360 is better than the PS3. This paragraph is going to be about how the Xbox 360 has better online play than the PS3.

* As a result of the Xbox 360 having a greater online experience than the PS3, the Xbox 360 is a far superior system.

4. *Example 2:* Writing a paragraph on the characterization of Walter Mitty. The paragraph is about how he is a round and static character.

* Since Walter Mitty is an individual with thoughts of his own and does not experience a significant change in the story, he is classified as a round and static character.

Using Quotes

1. What is your paragraph about, and/or what is it trying to prove?

* *Example:* My paragraph is trying to prove that Walter Mitty is a round character.

2. Find a quote that is relevant to your argument.

* *Example:* **“I was thinking…does it ever occur to you that I am thinking?”**

3. Place the quote strategically into your essay.

* Not where the topic sentence should be
* Not where the clincher sentence should be
* Not the sentence before the clincher sentence

4. Explain the context of the quote before you use it.

* *Example:* **When Mitty’s wife nags him upon her return from the hairdressers, Mitty defends himself by saying**, “I was thinking…does it ever occur to you that I am thinking?”

5. After you use the quote, explain HOW this quote helps support your argument.

* Remember our argument is about how Walter Mitty is a round character.
* *Example:* When Mitty’s wife nags him upon her return from the hairdressers, Mitty defends himself by saying, “I was thinking…does it ever occur to you that I am thinking?” **This shows he is a round character because he is capable of thinking complex thoughts, and furthermore, it shows that he is an individual with his own thoughts who is not just a mere pawn of his wife.**