ere are some notes that were compiled on the LSAT last season. They may help.

Formal Logic Translations

If X, then Y

= All X are Y

= Only Y are X

= X only if Y

= No X unless Y

In formal logic, the word "only" and the phrase "only if" translate into the word "then." So, Only Y is X translates into If X, then Y.

The contra positive is always deducible from a conditional statement. You form a contra positive by reversing the if and then terms and negating them:

If X, then Y (conditional)

If not Y, then not X (contra positive)

Critical Reading:

Ask yourself the following 5 questions when reading a passage/argument:

1. Who wrote it?
2. Why did the author write it?
3. What are the topic and scope?
4. What's the gist of it?

5. Where is it going?

General Strategies:

· Slow Down

· Fill in Every Bubble

· Use Process of Elimination (POE)

· Be Prepared for Anything

· Practice Consistently

· Choose Your Battles

· Keep Your Pencil Moving (underline, etc to keep your concentration)

Logical Reasoning/Arguments

If you can understand the author's reasoning, you've won half the battle. Most of the questions in arguments (logical reasoning) revolve around the hows and whys of the author's reasoning.

Keywords that signal conclusion: therefore, thus, hence, so, as a result, clearly

Keywords that signal evidence: because, since, for

Types of Conclusions:

- Assertion of Fact (stated as fact)
- Prediction (something will definitely happen)
- Recommendation (should)
- Comparison (more, than)
- If/Then Statements (if. . . then. . .)
- Value Judgements (best, better, worst, worse)

The Why Test: Use it every time you state the author's point or conclusion to make sure you have the right one. "Why did the author. . . .?"

Assumptions are leaps of logic. They're never explicitly stated in the argument.

Necessary v Sufficient:

· The LSAT constantly tests your appreciation of the difference between what is required for a result and what would guarantee a result. It often comes down to this simple question: Does X guarantee Y, or is X a requirement for Y?

· It's the distinction between conditions that are necessary for a result (required, needed, depended upon) and conditions that are sufficient for that result (guarantee, assure).

· The "if" clause always introduces a condition sufficient for a result.

The "then" clause always introduces a condition necessary for a result.

All the contra positive does is state (quite properly) that if the necessary condition hasn't occurred, then the sufficient condition cannot have occurred.

Process of Elimination for Arguments:

Relevance (scope). Is it relevant to the argument?

Extreme language. Never, must, exactly, always, only, cannot. They're wrong unless the stimulus also used extreme language.

Opposites (180). The exact opposite of what you're looking for.

Negating Assumption Answer Choices: The assumption is necessary for the main point to be valid. So negate it (say the opposite). If the conclusion remains in tact, that's not the assumption.

Use of the Word Support:

(1) Which of the following, if true, provides the most support for the argument?

Vs

(2) The passage provides the most support for which of the following?

1—It's a strengthen question.

2—It's an inference question.

ASSUMPTIONS SUMMARY:

Identify the main point, reasons and assumptions of the author.

If you're having trouble finding the assumption, look for the gap between two different ideas in the argument.

The assumption will always strengthen the author's point and is necessary for the point to follow from the information provided.

When down to two choices, negate each statement to see if the argument falls apart. If so, that's your answer.

Find conclusion, summarize evidence, and look for mismatched terms.

Types of Assumptions:

o Causal Assumptions: The stated possible cause is the only cause.

o Sampling Assumptions: A given statistic or sample is representative of the whole.

o Analogy Assumptions: One group, idea, or action is the same as another, with respect to the terms of the argument.

Common Assumptions: Predictions/Proposals:

· If the argument contains a proposal, then the author is assuming either that the proposal is actually capable of producing the desired effect or that the proposal will not produce an unwanted or unexpected outcome (perhaps in addition to the desired effect).

o Example: If someone were to propose treating the drinking water in our reservoirs with mercury to kill dangerous bacteria, he or she would be assuming that the mercury would not also kill the humans who drink the water.

· If the argument contains a prediction, then the author is assuming either that the conditions necessary for the prediction to come true will remain in place or that no other outcome is possible.

Example: If someone were to predict that a certain candidate will win an election because of that candidate's policies regarding health care, he or she would be assuming that health care will remain voters' primary concern on Election Day.

WEAKEN SUMMARY:

Identify the main point, reasons, and assumptions of the author.

Read critically looking for where the author made too big a leap in logic.

Then, when you go to the answer choices, look for a choice that has the most negative impact on that leap in logic.

Assume all choices to be hypothetically true.

WEAKEN: Take the argument apart, expecting the answer to: contradict a key assumption, contradict the conclusion, or propose a plausible alternative.

STRENGTHEN: Take the argument apart, expecting the answer to: confirm a key assumption, affirm the conclusion, or eliminate a plausible alternative.

Weaken Questions: The correct answer on a weaken question demonstrates that the author's point isn't necessarily true, even if all the reasons are.

Direct Impact: For Strengthen/Weaken questions, the answer has to have direct impact on the argument. If you have to add anything else, that's not your answer.

Arguments Techniques:

When you're down to two. . .

Identify how the choices are different.

Go back to the argument and re-read, keeping the difference in mind. Find something in the language of the argument that points out a flaw in the answer choices.

Eliminate the choice with the flaw.

PARADOX: RESOLVE/EXPLAIN QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

Identify the apparent discrepancy or paradox.

Go to the answer choices and look for a piece of information that, when added to the argument allows both facts from the argument to be true.

Assume all choices to be hypothetically true.

Sum up the discrepancy, and expect the right answer to allow all of the stimulus elements to coexist.

The stimulus contains two or more seemingly inconsistent statements, ideas that, on the face of it, cannot both be true. Your job will be to locate a statement that can clear up the inconsistency.

INFERENCE QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

1. Read carefully paying close attention to qualifying language and then go to the answer choices.
2. Once there, cross of any answer choices that are not directly supported by the passage.
3. Use relevance and extreme language to eliminate answer choices.
4. Use the contra positive if there are if/then statements in the passage and in the answer choices.

Accept each sentence as true, and rewrite any formal logic statements.

· Inference questions don't test your ability to evaluate the connection between evidence and conclusion. Instead, they test your ability to draw logical conclusions from information provided in the stimulus.

· If you can't make a prediction quickly and easily, don't delay: Start assessing the choices. Which one must be true?

· The word "many" does not have a precisely defined meaning in formal logic.

· It's much easier to show that something is usually true than it is to show that something is always true.

o Nice Vague Language: might, could, may, can some, possible, usually, sometimes, at least once, frequently

o Dangerously Extreme Language: always, never, at no time, must, will, all, not, positively, absolutely, unequivocally, each

Two Types of Common Inferences:

1. One type is a straight-forward deduction based on a single statement or a combination of statements from the stimulus.

2. The second type is the deduction of the conclusion that the stimulus statements are leading up to or implying.

· The correct answer must be something that was not stated explicitly in the text. Any choice that simply repeats information from the text must be wrong. However, some valid inferences connect pieces of information from the text in a way that the author did not do explicitly.

· Beware of extreme wording in Inference question answer choices. A correct LSAT inference stays in line with the author's topic, scope, tone, and point-of-view.

· Beware of specific numbers in Inference question answer choices.

Denial Test: To test whether a choice is deducible from the stimulus, deny the choice and see how it affects the stimulus. If the statements in the stimulus can still be true in the face of the denied choice, then the choice contained ideas that did not have to be true based on the stimulus and is therefore a

wrong answer. On the other hand, if the stimulus falls apart in the face of the denied choice, you've found your right answer — something that must be true if everything in the stimulus is true.

Inference: a valid deduction based on the stimulus. In other words, an inference is a statement that must be true if everything in the stimulus is true.

Often, finding the correct answer to an Inference question is simply a matter of contra posing one of the stimulus' statements.

You can only combine conditional statements if the "result" of one statement is the same as the "trigger" of another.

METHOD OF ARGUMENT/REASONING QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

Read the argument carefully and then describe what is happening in your own words.

Take this description and rigorously apply it to all the answer choices.

Once you're at the answer choices, use the technique of comparing the actions described in the choices against those that actually occurred in the argument.

Cross out anything that didn't appear in the argument.

Sum up the relation of evidence to conclusion in general terms.

There are two distinct types of Method of Argument questions. The first kind asks you to understand the argument in general terms and often what we might call "classic" argument types.

They require you to identify the answer choice that best describes the structure of the argument; the way in which the argument moves from evidence to conclusion.

Reasoning Questions: Your goal is to describe how the author constructed the argument. Try to match each piece of the answer choice to a piece of the argument.

Remember the classic logical flaws. Method of Argument Response questions often point to a logical flaw in the other speaker's argument.

The correct answer to a Method of Argument question will match the logical structure of the stimulus, piece by piece.

FLAW QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

Break down the argument into its parts; the flaw is usually related to its assumption.

State in your own words what the problem is with the argument.

With each answer, try to match the actions described in the answer choices with those of the argument itself. Look for the choice that has the same problem you found.

Eliminate answers that don't match; look for the answer that addresses the assumption.

Watch for the classic reasoning errors.

Common Types of Flaws:

- Alternative Possibilities
- Necessary vs. Sufficient
- Causation vs. Correlation
- Number vs. Percent
- Scope Shift
- Unwarranted Assumption
- Flaw of Representation
- Opinion vs. Fact
- Possibility vs. Certainty

Every flaw in an LR argument is a failure on the part of the evidence to logically establish the conclusion.

If a question hinges on a survey, study, or experiment you really want to look for a "Flaw of Representativeness" to answer the question.

PRINCIPLE QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

Make sure you're clear in which direction the argument is flowing—are you being asked to find something that supports or conforms?

Once you're sure, look for the answer that either justifies or matches the principle in the argument.

Look for a 1:1 match-up of each key element of the situation at hand, to the right answer.

A principle that underlies an argument is essentially an assumption of that argument. Use the skills you've developed for Assumption questions to help you here.

Principle questions ask you to either match or validate a decision or action.

(i.e. Which one of the following principles, if established, justifies the actions taken by Mia in the argument above?)

Principle questions involve fitting a specific situation into a global generality (or, occasionally, vice versa). Usually, we're given an argument and then asked to find the principle that seems to justify the author's reasoning.

PARALLEL REASONING QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

Parallel-the-reasoning questions will either contain flawed or valid reasoning, and the question will tip you off.

Try to diagram the argument then diagram each of the answer choices, comparing each one to the diagram you came up with the for the argument itself.

If the argument is flawed, be careful not to choose an answer that fixes it.

Save parallel-the-reasoning questions for last.

Compare the arguments, to find one that uses the same kind of evidence to draw the same kind of conclusion as the stimulus. You can compare: the stimulus conclusion to that of each choice, OR a paraphrase of the entire stimulus to that of each choice.

Whenever possible, diagram parallel arguments.

Watch out for arguments or answer choices that confuse numbers with percents. Evidence about percentages or rates rarely supports a conclusion about numbers and vice versa.

POINT AT ISSUE QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

This relatively marginal (about one per section, perhaps) question type has an identity and protocol all its own. The stem is generally attached to a dialogue between two individuals and essentially asks, "What are they arguing about?"

Locate the basis of the conflicting opinions.

To come up with the right answer to such a question, you need to concentrate on topic and cope. The right answer will be a statement wholly within the scope of the two people's comments, as well as something on which they would certainly disagree.

MAIN POINT QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

Main point questions ask you to find what the author is generally driving at with his argument. Therefore you must understand the argument's scope and its conclusion to answer a Main Point question.

The best tool for tackling these questions is the One Sentence test.

ROLE OF A STATEMENT QUESTIONS SUMMARY:

Role of a statement questions will point to a statement in the stimulus and ask you to determine what role the statement plays in the argument. Since the main components of an argument are evidence and conclusion, the first thing you should do is check whether the statement in question plays either of those roles.

If the statement in question is not evidence or conclusion, evaluate each answer choice in turn, asking yourself, "Is this what the author is doing with this statement?"

Logic Games

Test how well you can organize an incomplete set of spatial relations in order to extract information efficiently.

Types of Logic Games:

· Sequencing games involve putting entities in order. They use language like "rank," "schedule," or "put in order" to describe the action of the game. The rules in sequencing games use words like "first", "last", "before," "after," adjacent," and "between."

o Strict Sequencing: Ordering entities with respect to defined positions. (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc) (Draw horizontal lines with numbers/names indicating order, fill in appropriately)

o Loose Sequencing: Ordering entities with respect to each other. (before, after, etc)

(Draw vertically or horizontally depending on the most logical visualization. Use . . . when you don't know how many entities are between two others, use ___ when you know specifically how many spaces are between.)

· Matching Games involve matching two kinds of entities to each other. Language like "match", or "each person. . . "

o Draw a list when there are more than 3 –5 entities with more than 3 options. Draw a grid when there are entities with options and only 2 descriptors like yes/not or red/yellow.

· Selection games involve choosing entities from a larger group. They use language like "choose," "select," or "pick" to describe the action of the game. The rules tend to involve "If-then" statements like "If A is chosen, B cannot be chosen." Numbers are essential to these games since sub-groups are selected from a larger group.

o Choosing a small group out of a large group. For example, the hobbyist and the fish and plants that go in the tank. Not all entities are used at once. Select some entities and reject others.

o Diagram to show what's in and what's out. Keep the entities separate. Use upper/lower case and be consistent.

o You can also make a roster of entities for each question. Circle those selected and X out those rejected.

o Kaplan Says: Select some entities and reject others. Roster of entities for each question; circle those selected and X out those rejected. Common twists are not knowing exactly how many are selected or rejected; distinctions among entities.

· Distribution games involve groups, but are focused on dividing the group up into categories or sub-groups. They use language like "place," "distribute," or "sort" to describe the action of the game, although they may also use language like "choose," "select," etc. as well. What makes these games different from selection games is that entities are put into distinct groups or categories that are provided in the set-up. Any time you are told that there are several categories, teams, or groups into which the entities will be placed, you are dealing with a distribution game. These games have rules that involve "if-then" statements like "If A is placed on Team 1, then B is placed on Team 2."

o Forming several small groups out of a large group. Placing entities into distinct groups.

o Draw out all of the clues with each entity's symbol written out each time (like CCC). Place them in a chart. Make sure to note what can't go where.

o Place them in a table with each subgroup and its slots indicated.

o Kaplan Says: Place entities into distinct subgroups. Entities placed into a table with each subgroup and its slots indicated. Common twists are not knowing exactly how many appear in each subgroup.

· Hybrid games involve performing two or more of the actions from other games. Entities usually have multiple characteristics. There are usually multiple types of entities. Hybrid games combine a minimum of two actions within a single game: sequencing, matching, selection, and distribution.

o So, you might see a combination of selection and distribution (select 6 entities from a pool of 9, then divide the 6 entities into two groups of 3 entities each), a combination of distribution and sequencing (divide 8 entities into two groups of 4 entities each and then rank the entities from first to fourth within each group), a combination of sequencing and matching (schedule 5 entities for interviews and match them with one of three possible interviewers), or even a combination of sequencing and sequencing (determine the finishing order of 6 entities running 2 separate races).

o Draw a chart with main entities across the top and the other characteristics down the side. Usually there are two of each black/white, male/female, etc. Write them as B/W or M/F to remind yourself that those are the only options. Don't confuse the B/W box with the M/F box.

Or draw out the lines with the rows necessary in order to do sequencing and determine characteristics based on sequence.

5-Step Method For Logic Games

1. Conduct an Overview: Get a sense of the real-life situation, the entities, the action, and the numbers involved in the game.

2. Visualize and Map Out: Determine the best way to sketch or map out the information contained in the game.

3. Consider the Rules One at a Time: Translate the language of the rules into something you can more readily manage and apply.

4. Combine Rules and Deduce (where possible): When an entity appears in more than one rule, look for ways to combine rules and make deductions.

5. Answer the Question: Understanding the information above readies you for all the twists and turns the test-maker will throw at you in the questions.

S-E-A-L Method

S: Situation (what's going on here?)

E: Entities (what are the objects, who are the players?)

A: Action (what are you doing? Sequencing, grouping, selecting, etc)

L: Limitations (what are the numbers? Can you come up with a limited options set up?)

Recognizing A Limited Options Game

Limited Options games are games in which the games' action, rules, and limitations combine in the set up to limit the number of acceptable entity setups to two or three options.

Are there any telltale signs that a game will be a Limited Options game? Yes. A game is likely to break down into limited options if you can spot (roll your mouse over each bullet point below for a short description):

a key player; (an entity that is very restricted by game rules)

a bloc of entities that must move together; or (a group of entities that must move together into the game setup)

a numbers deduction. (made from a rule or combination of rules that limits the number of ways that a game can be set up)

Which Questions: aka “grab-a-rule”. Apply each clue to each answer choice, starting with the most concrete and restrictive.

An element being “in” is just as important as an element being “out”

Draw a new diagram for each question in the game.

There are hidden rules in the opening paragraph. Don’t miss them. They often tell you how often and entity can be used or if they all need to be used.

Reading Comprehension

To succeed on Reading Comp, you must have the ability to:

· separate fact from opinion

· capture the gist of written text

· use Keywords to help you navigate through a passage

· skim past detail to extract the more significant aspects of the text

· paraphrase text to make it your own

· create a mental Roadmap of the passage, to help you master its structure and locate relevant text when the questions demand it

To attack the questions, you must be able to:

· recognize and manage the common question types

· recognize common wrong answer types and eliminate them quickly

· pre-phrase answers whenever possible

Topic — the author's broad subject matter.

Scope — the specific aspect of the topic that interests the author.

Purpose — why the author has written the passage.

Main Idea — the specific point that the author is trying to get across to the reader.

Strategies:

· Read the questions first.

· Work the passage: underline, circle or star any word, phrase or section of the passage that was mentioned in one of the questions.

· Look for the underlying structure of the passage.

· What is the author trying to do? Refute, prove, debate, explain, present evenly, etc.

Passage Purposes:

There are only a few "purposes" that motivate the authors of standardized test passages. As you read, ask yourself which of these "purposes" the author seems to be engaged in.

1. To EXPLAIN: The author wants to explain a phenomenon — specifically, why that phenomenon occurred. (Often he will contrast the "real story" with the previously believed, or commonly-believed, version.)

2. To ADVOCATE: The author wants to argue for, to recommend, a particular proposal or approach or idea. (Such an author will often, in the course of the passage, bring up possible objections and try to demolish them.)

3. To REBUT: The author wants to rebut or challenge someone else's idea or theory. Your question as you read should be: "Is the author merely critical of that idea, or does he have one to offer in its place?"

4. To COMPARE OR CONTRAST: The author wants to examine the similarities and differences between two ideas, theories, proposals, or schools of thought. Your question as you read should be: "Which (if either) does the author favor?"

5. To CRITIQUE: The author wants to evaluate the success or failure, the quality or deficiency, of a policy or organization. The root of the word is "value" — that is, to assess whether something is good or bad.

6. To DESCRIBE: The author wants to present the salient facts and features, but deliberately takes no positions and makes no judgments. Such a passage is totally objective. Rest assured, the testmaker will create questions to test whether you recognize that the author expresses no personal opinions.

Passage Structures:

· Description: The author uses factual information to explain a phenomenon, process, or theory.

· Compare and contrast: The author discusses the differences and similarities between two theories or viewpoints.

· Reconciliation of two ideas: The author explains how two different ideas or viewpoints are in fact compatible.

· Interpretation: The author argues for a particular interpretation of a theory or viewpoint.

· Rebuttal of an interpretation: The author argues against a particular, and often popular, interpretation of a theory or viewpoint.

Recommendation: The author supports a particular policy or course of action.

Keywords:

· Emphasis Keywords: any word or phrase that an author uses to say, "Here's what I consider important or significant." (most of all, especially)

· Continuation Keywords: any word or phrase that says "Here comes more of the same." (and, moreover)

· Conclusion Keywords: any word or phrase that says "Here's my ultimate point." (therefore, thus)

· Contrast Keywords: any word or phrase that says "A shift or change in opinion is about to take place." (but, however)

· Sequence Keywords: any word or phrase that says "There's a logical order at work here." (first of all, next)

· Evidence Keywords: any word or phrase that says "Here is support for a point I am making." (because, since)

Cracking the Questions by Question Type:

· Main Idea Questions: Come up with your own main idea—what you think the passage is about. Be critical; any word or phrase or idea that you think is an essential part of the passage MUST be part of the answer you choose.

· Structure of the Passage Questions: Write out what you think is the general flow of the passage. Did the author introduce three theories and then refute them all? If so, look for a similar choice. If any part of the choice is wrong, it's all wrong. Cross it off.

· Primary Purpose Questions: Decide what you feel the author was attempting to do in the passage. For example, was the author debunking a myth, showing how a well-accepted theory is correct, or introducing a new theory? Then match your description to the answer choices.

· Author's Tone/Attitude Questions: Come up with your own description. Typically it's something pretty wishy-washy. LSAT reading comp authors don't get too worked up one way or another. Words like "balanced" and "objective" are usually right; words like "enthusiastic" and "derogatory" are usually wrong. Words like "dispassionate" and "apathetic" are usually wrong too.

· Analogy Questions: These questions will often ask which is most similar to the situation in the passage. Eliminate anything that does not contain any of the key attributes.

Reading Comp Passage Selection:

Usually 4 Types

Law Passage—often very challenging and stiff with unfamiliar language

Science Passage—lots of detail questions can earn points

Humanities Passage—readable, but usually have lots of inference and tone questions

Social Science Passage—easier to read, but don't have many detail questions

5 Step Method:

· Read the Passage Critically: Read for topic, scope, purpose and main idea. Build a road map.

· Read the Question: Look for clues to help you with step 3.

· Research the Relevant Text in the Passage: Use the roadmap to guide you.

· Make a Prediction: Say in your own words what you think is right and then match up the answer choices with that.

· Go to the Choices: Match up the answer choices with what you'd said was right. And trust your answers!

Five Common Wrong Answer Types:

· Au Contraire: States the opposite of what the question calls for or what is cited in the passage.

· Outside the Scope: Deals with material beyond the confines of the passage or the author's concern. (Note: Since Topic is broader than scope, a choice can relate to the correct topic but still be outside the scope that the author takes up.)

· Distortion: Relates to a point in the discussion but fundamentally confuses some aspect of it.

· Extreme: Similar to Distortion, but takes a point and blows it out of proportion; an unwarranted exaggeration.

Faulty Use of Detail: Focuses on a detail from the wrong part of the passage or takes a relevant detail out of context.

Anticipating implies taking an active stance toward the text. The passive reader, by contrast, lets the text simply wash over him, which is no way to pick out the relevant aspects that will translate into points. Remember, the key word is "Attack"! And that means constantly asking yourself "How does this new stuff fit in with what I just read? What's the main point to take out of this part of the passage? Where is this going to go from here?"

To paraphrase means to put the text into your own words. Don't be a parrot! You get points for understanding the gist of the text, not for repeating it back. If you can put the author's ideas into your own words, then you're staying one step ahead of the game.

Keywords are structural signals supplied by the author that give you hints as to the direction the text is going - they're words or phrases that provide clues about the author's train of thought. Contrast keywords like "but" or "however" signal that a shift is coming up. Sequence keywords like "moreover" and "additionally" tell you to expect more of the same. Use these structural signals to help you navigate through the passage.

When a global question asks you about the structure of the passage, you can quickly eliminate answer choices by doing a quick vertical scan of the first and last elements in each answer choice.

Some authors write to rebut an interpretation or take issue with a viewpoint.

Tips for this kind of passage:

· When a passage begins with a "traditional" view, or a statement of what's "often" the case, watch out! Authors often cite such views up front as the basis for their subsequent opposition — in other words, as a setup for the author's assertion that the standard view is all wet.

· Anticipate as you read! Keywords are crucial in this respect: This passage is humming along in a descriptive way until the word "however" shows up in the middle of the third sentence. That "however" announces that the author has more than a simple description up his sleeve.

Sometimes an author writes to describe a process or theory:

Tips for this kind of passage:

· Remember to read for structure first. Details can be located within the structure later if and when they become relevant.

· If the author describes a person or a person's views, don't confuse the author with the person he or she is describing. Keep 'em straight!

· If an author describes a viewpoint, always separate the author's demeanor from the tone of her topic. A passage may be about what is generally considered a passionate and controversial topic, yet the author's tone may be cool, dispassionate, and objective: "Just the facts, ma'am!" Questions asking about the author's style, tone or method will reflect this issue.

The LSAT sometimes contains Reading Comp passages that compare and contrast.

Tips for this kind of passage:

Once a compare and contrast structure becomes evident, start focusing on points of difference and similarity between the two viewpoints. On what aspects do they differ? On what aspects are they similar? Are the two viewpoints essentially similar, or are they quite different or even contradictory?

Writing Sample

Most important characteristics are organization and essay length.

Indent fully to set off each paragraph fully or skip a whole line.

Essay should contain 5 paragraphs: 1st state opinion, 2nd – 4th support and give points, 5th restate opinion.

3 Paragraphs of points/support demonstrates that your argument is concise and well organized.

The sides are even. There's no right or wrong. You just have to choose and write.

When choosing a side to write about, list its pros and cons.

Begin by restating the problem. Try to be somewhat creative.

Don't make the reader wait to find out the major reasons why you are supporting your Winner. Start right in with the strongest ones.

Craft your first sentence (or two) on the scratch paper, so that you can be sure that your essay gets a strong sendoff.

We recommend the following simple structure:

Paragraph 1 - Present the argument for the Winner, and try to paper over its weaknesses.

Paragraph 2 - Present the argument against the Loser, despite any strengths.

Following your opening sentence, you should tell the reader why the Winner ought to be chosen. Start with your strongest argument, and list the arguments for your Winner in an order that strikes you as logical. And what about the Loser, you ask?

All in all, the "paragraph 1 Winner then paragraph 2 Loser" structure is, for most students, the easiest and clearest way to accomplish the task.

Writing Principle #1: Don't just repeat facts; tell the reader what the facts mean.

Writing Principle #2: Judicious use of Keywords impresses the reader that your writing — and hence, your thinking — are structured and disciplined.

Make a conscious effort to insert appropriate Keywords into your argument. Among the most useful ones are words and phrases that bring out the essay's structure in a logical and elegant way:

"For one thing" "By the same token"

"Furthermore" "Above all"

"Moreover"

Emphasis Keywords can be — shall we say? — especially impressive:

"especially" "significant"

"most important" "particularly" Possibilities for the body paragraphs:

Be willing to admit that the Loser has a strength or two, but more quickly to the Loser's weaknesses.

Don't spend a lot of time on the conclusion. A well-written and well-planned essay can merely come to a stop and still impress.

Variation 1:

2: Both sides in light of first consideration

3: Both sides in light of second consideration

4: weighing the 2 considerations.

Variation 2:

2: Everything that can be said about choice 1

3: Everything that can be said about choice 2

4: A sentence or two for choice one followed by 3 or 4 explaining why choice 2 is better.

Variation 3:

2: A sentence or two for choice 1, followed by 3 or 4 for choice 2

3: A sentence or two for choice 1, followed by 3 or 4 for choice 2

4: A sentence or two for choice 1, followed by 3 or 4 for choice 2

Good words to use:

Example, instance, precedent, paradigm, archetype

Illustrate, demonstrate, highlight, acknowledge, exemplify, embody

Support, endorse, advocate, maintain, contend, espouse, champion

Supporter, proponent, advocate, adherent

Dispute, dismiss, outweigh, rebut, refute

Only use $10 words if you can spell them correctly!

Rules to Write By:

Write as if you were actually making the recommendation

Write naturally, but don't use abbreviations or contractions.

Make sure your position is clear.

Write as neatly as possible.

Indent you paragraphs.

Don't use first person. The assignment is formal enough that it isn't appropriate.

Personal experience is not relevant.

Edit Your Essay

Be concise: Use as few words as possible. Avoid redundancy.

Be forceful: Avoid self-reference. Use the active voice.

Be grammatical: Use formal English. Maintain a simple, declarative voice.