

# Guidelines for Composition

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## What is included in a composition:

**Thesis statement**—the controlling thought of the essay

- The thesis statement is included in the introductory paragraph.
- The thesis statement tells the purpose of the essay.

**Essay map**—a preview of the main points of the essay

- The essay map identifies the main points that will be covered in the essay.
- The essay map indicates in which order that the main points will be discussed.

**Introduction**—the beginning of the paper

- The introduction should have a good lead-in sentence to catch the reader's attention.
- The introduction should include the thesis statement, essay map, and any important background information.

**Body Paragraphs**—support for your thesis statement

- Each paragraph should discuss one of the main ideas in your essay map.
- Each paragraph should have one topic sentence.
- All sentences in the paragraph should support the topic sentence for that paragraph.
- Details in the paragraph should be developed with *second order* support.
- Transitions should be used within and between paragraphs.

**Conclusion**—ties the essay together

- The conclusion may summarize the main points.
- The words and sentences in the conclusion should not merely repeat what has been already stated in the essay.

## **Example of how to use the guidelines for composition:**

### **Assignment:**

Your assignment is to write a five-paragraph essay that explains what point the author was trying to make in the novel, *A Separate Peace*. In other words, what did the author intend for us to gain from reading this novel?

### **Idea Bank:**

- What it means to be a friend—the importance of friendship
- The consequence of one's actions—think before you act
- Communication is important—avoiding misunderstandings
- Importance of making peace with your friends—betrayal/forgiveness
- Future can be unexpected
  - College
  - Military
  - Being on your own

### **Examples:**

#### **Possible lead-in sentences:**

- Young people often face difficult decisions in life.
- What would you do if you hurt a good friend?

#### **Possible thesis statement:**

- The author of *A Separate Peace* made several main points in the novel.
- The author of *A Separate Peace* taught several important lessons in the novel.

**Possible essay map:** (Hint—look at your idea bank, select three supporting details, decide which order to discuss the points, and write a sentence that states these three ideas.)

- Example:  
The themes of the novel include the importance of friendship, accepting the consequence of one's actions, and communicating your thoughts and feelings.

### **Sample introductory paragraph:**

Young people often face difficult decisions in life. The author of *A Separate Peace* made several main points in the novel that might help teenagers with the challenges they face. The themes of the novel include the importance of friendship, accepting the consequence of one's actions, and communicating your thoughts and feelings. John Knowles wrote an exciting story about two teenage preparatory school classmates that illustrates these themes. By reading about Gene and Finny, a young person could learn about life.