

Instructions for opinion paper taken from:

<https://www.murphycentre.ca/trudy/English3201/HandoutWritingtheOpinionEssay.htm>

Edited for use by Meredith Martin for PSY336 – Psychology of Adolescence

Opinion Paper

As a professional working with adolescents, you will likely be called upon to share your opinion or provide advice around important issues with colleagues, parents, and your community. Therefore, the goal of this assignment is to provide you with an opportunity to form an educated opinion around a controversial topic in the field and to practice how to communicate your opinion to others *using evidence*. Each assignment will ask you to address a topic that is currently being debated – meaning that there is unclear, incomplete, or competing evidence around the issue.

Please note that an opinion paper is NOT simply a statement of your opinion. The goal is to *provide a reasoned argument* and support for your point.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Step 1: Choose one of the following topics, currently being debated in the field.

These issues are currently being debated, meaning that there is unclear, incomplete, or competing evidence around this issue. The first step is to select a controversial topic you want to research and discuss. Please choose one of the topics below:

- Should the minimum drinking age in the US be reduced to 16?
- Should parents pay their adolescents for completing household chores?
- Should teachers require adolescents to complete classwork in groups?
- Should juvenile offenders (under age 18) who commit murder be tried as adults?
- Should public schools require students to complete schoolwork on computers/laptops (assuming they are provided by the school)?
- Should public schools be required to teach abstinence-only sex education?
- Are television dramas depicting teen mental health problems (e.g., Netflix's *13 Reasons Why*) good for adolescents' mental health?
- Should parents keep track of and regulate their adolescents' social media?

Step 2: Do your research.

In order to inform your opinion, you must examine the literature on this topic. Your next step is to identify at least three academic/empirical articles on this topic. At least one should argue for the opposite side. You may use assigned readings from the course and/or your own research to support your point. However, please make sure that you are using credible, peer-reviewed sources (e.g., academic journals; academic texts). **YOUR TEXTBOOK DOES NOT COUNT...don't cite it.**

Remember, the purpose of this paper is to provide a reasoned argument for your opinion. This means that you must provide *evidence* for your thesis (your stated opinion). Any statements you make that would cause a reader to say, "Wait, how do you know that's true?" need to be backed up with documentation from outside sources. "I saw something on TV about it one time" would not be considered adequate documentation. Neither would "I read it on a webpage."



For this paper, you must provide at least three citations from credible (i.e., peer-reviewed) sources as support for your argument. Please provide citations for any references sources in APA format at the end of your paper. Your citations do not count towards your page limit.

Don't know how to cite something in APA format? Check out:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

Step 3: Write up your opinion paper.

Write a 1-2 page opinion paper explicating your position on the topic you chose. Use Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced. An opinion paper is NOT simply a statement of your opinion. An opinion essay exists to prove your main point – your thesis. This should be clearly stated in your opening paragraph. Don't leave the reader to guess what your position is on the issue - take a clear stand! Next, develop your argument in the body of your essay. Each paragraph should contain a single, clear idea that supports your point of view. You can use examples and illustrations, cause-and-effect reasoning, comparison/contrast, or other methods to support your argument. Remember that a paragraph is typically three to five sentences that develop a single, clear idea. A good paragraph should start with a topic sentence that sums up your main idea.

In general, an opinion paper is structured like so:

- Paragraph One: The introduction. Here you state the main idea of your entire essay -- the point you are trying to make or prove. This paragraph should include your thesis statement plus three reasons why you believe this statement to be true.
- Paragraphs Two, Three and Four: These are the body of your essay. Remember back in Paragraph One, you gave three reasons for your opinion? Three reasons, three body paragraphs. Each of the body paragraphs should take one of your reasons and explain it in more detail, citing sources where necessary.
- Paragraph Five: The conclusion. Former Newfoundland premier Joey Smallwood once said about giving speeches: "First I tell them what I'm going to tell them, then I tell them, then I tell them what I told them." That's how you write an essay. In the conclusion, tell them what you told them. Sum up your argument by restating your thesis statement and reminding the reader what your three reasons were. In an argumentative essay, you can finish with a "call to action" telling the reader what you would like them to do as a result.

Basic “Do” comments for writing an opinion essay:

- Write in a formal style
- Introduce the topic clearly
- Provide a unique and biased opinion
- State clear topic sentences
- Present support for the arguments
- Stay on topic
- Avoid redundancies
- Be professional and diplomatic

Basic “Don't” comments for writing an opinion essay:

- Don't write in the first person
- Don't use colloquial expressions
- Don't use short forms



- Don't use emotive vocabulary
- Don't use over-generalizations
- Don't use statistics without proper referencing
- Don't give personal examples



GRADING RUBRIC FOR OPINION PAPERS

Description	Unacceptable (Below standards)	Acceptable (Meets minimum standards)	Good (Exceeds minimum standards)	Points
Introduction	The introduction does not clearly state the author's opinion/thesis and/or does not provide an overview of the reasons to support their opinion. It is difficult to anticipate the purpose of this paper.	The introduction less clearly states the author's opinion/thesis and/or does not provide clear reasons to support their opinion. The reader can mostly anticipate the content and purpose of the paper.	The introduction clearly states the author's opinion/thesis as well as three reasons to support their opinion. The reader can clearly anticipate the content and purpose of the paper.	3
Argument	The author provides either no arguments or irrational arguments for their main point. They do not include at least three scholarly sources to support their position. Scholarly sources/arguments do not clearly support their main point.	The author provides a reasonable rationale for their argument, including citing at least three relevant scholarly sources to support their position. At some points, their argument may be less clear, but for the most part, they support their primary thesis.	Overall, the paper makes a clear, convincing, and logical argument. At least three relevant scholarly sources are provided to support their position and there are no inaccuracies in presenting the research. Each supporting point relates directly to their primary thesis.	12 (4pts for each argument)
Conclusion	The conclusion does not reiterate the main purpose of the paper or effectively sum up the primary argument.	The conclusion may somewhat review and reiterate the main purpose of the paper, but the conclusion is less effective in summing up the primary argument.	The conclusion provides a clear review of the main arguments and integrates this with a reiteration of the main purpose of the paper (i.e., the opinion). The conclusion effectively sums up the primary argument.	3
Format	Paper does not include at least three citations from scholarly sources in APA format AND/OR the cited references are inappropriate. Formatting does not follow the guidelines outlined in the syllabus.	Paper is 2-3 pages long, follows all formatting guidelines outlined in the syllabus, and includes at least three citations from scholarly sources in APA format. All sources are from peer-reviewed scholarly research outlets. There may be some minor errors in APA formatting.	Paper is 2-3 pages long, follows all formatting guidelines outlined in the syllabus, and includes <u>at least three</u> citations from scholarly sources in APA format. All sources are from peer-reviewed scholarly research outlets. All references are cited in text and in the references section according to APA 6th edition guidelines.	4
Mechanics	Grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors significantly detract from reading the paper. Basic sentence structure often includes poor structure (e.g., run-on sentences).	There may be a few grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors, but overall they do not detract too much from reading the paper. Basic sentence structure is good (e.g., avoids run-on sentences, sentence structure is solid).	Grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors are RARE and do not detract from reading the paper. Basic sentence structure is good (e.g., avoids run-on sentences, sentence structure is solid).	3
Total Possible Points				25

