

High school to college

High school essay example

In this paper, I am going to tell you about *Avatar*. This is a good movie about a Space Marine named Jake Sully. Jake goes on a mission to the planet Pandora. He goes to work for a bad guy named Parker Selfridge. Parker wants to kill the planet's natives so he can mine their lands. Jake is expected to help Colonel Quaritch. But he joins the natives. He falls in love with Neytiri. They fight a battle to save their planet. You should see this movie. It's a good film that will blow you away.

In a college essay . . .

- You may not “telegraph” your topic.
- You must say why *Avatar* is a good movie and be specific.
- You cannot simply re-tell the plot.
- You must vary sentence structure.
- You should not use contractions.
- You should avoid second-person references (“you”).
- You cannot use slang.
- You must proofread for grammar and punctuation.
- You must have a thesis statement.

Note the differences

In this paper, I am going to tell you about *Avatar*. This is a good movie about a Space Marine named Jake Sully. Jake goes on a mission to the planet Pandora. He goes to work for a bad guy named Parker Selfridge. Parker wants to kill the planet's natives so he can mine their lands. Jake is expected to help Colonel Quaritch. But he joins the natives. He falls in love with Neytiri. They fight a battle to save their planet. You should see this movie. It's a good film that will blow you away.

The American film industry has produced many superb action films. Unfortunately, some of today's movies will not be listed among them. One example is *Avatar*, an action film where exhilarating visual sequences are negated by mediocre acting and an unimaginative storyline. If Hollywood is to continue its tradition of excellent action films, directors must find more creative plots to blend with superlative special effects and demand better performances from their casts.

Know the assignment

Watch for key words

illustrate

explain

analyze

evaluate

compare and contrast

discuss

Know your teacher's expectations

- ❖ Some teachers will grade your paper primarily for content.
- ❖ Some English instructors will concentrate on grammar.
- ❖ Some teachers will grade you on all elements of composition: content, grammar, coherence, originality, and style.

Six steps to writing a successful college paper

1. Start early
2. Form a thesis statement
3. Create an outline
4. Write a rough draft
5. Revise (edit)
6. Proofread



Your thesis: Make a point

Most of your writing assignments will share one characteristic: You will be asked to make a point, which will be expressed as a thesis statement.

A good thesis statement includes several characteristics

- ✓ It says something significant about what you have read, something that helps you understand the assignment better and prove your understanding to the instructor.
- ✓ It makes a statement that is not obvious.
- ✓ It is usually arguable.

Any college paper should include . . .

❑ An introduction

Your initial impression on the reader (instructor) is extremely important. Is your introduction ...

- Interesting or unique?
- Clear?
- Grammatically correct?

❑ Body paragraphs (support)

- Do they provide examples that support your thesis statement?
- Do they include topic sentences and transitions?
- Are they clear? Relevant? Correct?

❑ A conclusion

Your final chance to impress your reader (teacher). Does your conclusion ...

- Sum up your thesis (main idea)?
- Leave reader with a sense of finality?

Do not . . .

- Write “I am going to discuss . . .”
- Use contractions (“do not,” not “don’t”)
- Use second-person references (“you”)
- Start a paper with definitions (“Webster defines ...”)
- Cite Wikipedia as a source (use .edu or .org sources)
- Use abbreviations such as etc.
- Use slang terms or texting jargon
- Rely upon your computer’s spell checker or grammar checker
- Confuse words (there/their, too/to, then/than)
- Attempt humor
- Plagiarize words, thoughts, or ideas

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 1. Make an appointment for a writing consultation (individual or group appointments available).
 2. Email us a grammar or writing question.

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