

HOW TO WRITE AN IMPROMPTU ESSAY

Let's pretend you are asked to write an essay based on the following *prompt*:

Explain why dogs are considered man's best friend.

Step 1: Ask a Question

Ask a question about the topic of the prompt. Then list your details.

Example question: *What kinds of dogs benefit us in some way?*

Ideas:

- Police dogs*
- Guide dogs*
- Dogs that sniff bombs & drugs*
- Guard dogs*
- Dogs that serve as companions or pets*

Step 2: Organize Your Ideas

Write a thesis sentence (the main idea of your essay) using the writing prompt when possible.

Example thesis sentence: *Dogs are truly man's best friends.* (Everything in your essay will flow from this sentence.)

Step 3: Ask a Thesis Question

Ask a question about your thesis sentence and list three (3) answers.

Example thesis questions: *How or in what ways are dog's man's best friends?*

Step 3: (continued)

- Example answers:
1. *Dogs can be taught to perform jobs.*
 2. *Dogs protect people and their property.*
 3. *Dogs are loyal companions.*
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Step 4: Write Supporting Sentences

These sentences **DIRECTLY** support the **ANSWERS** to your thesis question in Step 3.

Use your **IDEAS** from Step 1.

Answers to the thesis question and supporting sentences:

1. *Dogs can be taught to perform jobs.*
 - *Dogs are trained to be police dogs and watch dogs.*
 - *Dogs are used to help the handicapped.*
 - *Dogs are used to detect drugs and explosives.*
 2. *Dogs protect people and their property.*
 - *Barking dogs will stop a thief from entering a home.*
 - *Dogs will alert you if someone is near your home.*
 - *Dogs will attack strangers who break into a house.*
 3. *Dogs are loyal companions.*
 - *Dogs like to play with their owners.*
 - *Dogs enjoy spending time with their owners.*
 - *Dogs have given their lives to protect people.*
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Step 5: Write Your Introduction

Step 5: (continued)

Start with an ATTENTION grabber.

- A question
- A quote
- A surprising fact or statement

Example:

The term “dumb animal” has always confused me when it is used to describe dogs.

Include the GENERAL TOPICS of your essay. Use the ANSWERS to your Thesis Question in Step 3 as your General Topics.

Example:

Why dumb? Dogs can be taught to perform jobs. Dogs are used to protect people and property. Dogs are also known to be loyal companions.

Include your THESIS SENTENCE from Step 2.

Example:

I strongly believe that dogs are truly man’s best friends.

Use TRANSITION WORDS and/or PHRASES to help your paragraph flow smoothly, such as...

- first
- next
- in addition
- finally
- consequently
- however

Step 6: Write the Body of Your Essay

Write the TOPIC SENTENCE for the paragraph. Use one of the ANSWERS you wrote for Step 3 as your Topic Sentence. Then write your SUPPORTING SENTENCES. Use the supporting SENTENCES you wrote in Step 4. Use transition words and/or phrases to build bridges between sentences and paragraphs.

Step 6: (continued)

Example: *Dogs can be taught to perform many useful and important jobs. Dogs are trained to be police dogs and watch dogs. In addition, dogs are used as guide dogs to help the handicapped. Finally, because of their excellent sense of smell, dogs can effectively detect drugs and explosives.*

(Repeat for each paragraph.)

Example: *Dogs are also known to protect people and their property. Barking dogs, though sometimes annoying, will stop a thief from entering a home. In fact, dogs will alert you if someone is even near your home. If noise is not enough, dogs will attack strangers who break into a house.*

Most importantly, dogs are loyal companions. As many dog owners know, dogs like to play with their owners. In fact, dogs seem to truly enjoy spending time with their owners, even if it is not play time. Dogs have even been known to give their lives to protect people.

Step 7: Write Your Conclusion

This is the FINAL RESTATEMENT of your Thesis (main idea).

- Do NOT just recopy your Thesis Sentence.
- Refer back to your ATTENTION GRABBER.
- You can SUMMARIZE your main points—however in Mr. Duckworth's class, you MUST summarize your main points.

Example: *In conclusion, how could anyone believe that dogs are just “dumb animals?” Considering all that dogs do for people, dogs should be given more respect. Can anyone disagree that dogs are truly our best friends?*

(Note that in this example the main points were not summarized. This is not acceptable in my class.)

Final Product (see next page)

Dogs Are Man's Best Friends

The term “dumb animal” has always confused me when it is used to describe dogs. Why dumb? Dogs can be taught to perform jobs. Dogs are used to protect people and property. Dogs are also known to be loyal companions. I strongly believe that dogs are truly man's best friends.

Dogs can be taught to perform many useful and important jobs. Dogs are trained to be police dogs and watch dogs. In addition, dogs are used as guide dogs to help the handicapped. Finally, because of their excellent sense of smell, dogs can effectively detect drugs and explosives.

Dogs are also known to protect people and their property. Barking dogs, though sometimes annoying, will stop a thief from entering a home. In fact, dogs will alert you if someone is even near your home. If noise is not enough, dogs will attack strangers who break into a house.

Most importantly, dogs are loyal companions. As many dog owners know, dogs like to play with their owners. In fact, dogs seem to truly enjoy spending time with their owners, even if it is not play time. Dogs have even been known to give their lives to protect people.

In conclusion, how could anyone believe that dogs are just “dumb animals?” Considering all that dogs do for people, dogs should be given more respect. Can anyone disagree that dogs are truly our best friends?

NOTE: This document was adapted from a website and would have to be rewritten using all new original material, though the format would remain exactly the same.
