

## How to Write an Opinion Essay

The basic five-paragraph essay structure, which you have probably used many times by this point, works extremely well for an opinion essay. It's a starting point, and when you get to university your profs will expect a more complex approach to essay writing. If you feel confident about your essay-writing skills, you can certainly branch out into longer and more complex essays. But this basic five-paragraph outline is a good starting point, especially if you feel uncertain of your ability.

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 – make a clear stand!

**Next**, develop your argument in the body of your essay. Each paragraph should contain a single, clear idea that support your point of view. You can use examples and illustration, cause-and-effect reasoning, comparison/contrast or other methods of development to support your argument.

**Research:** 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).

**Remember** that a paragraph is three to five sentences that develop a single, clear idea. A good paragraph often begins with a **topic sentence** that sums up your main idea.

- **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.** 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" -- tell the reader what you would like them to do as a result.

**Sample Five-Paragraph Essay****Subject:** Should parents have their children vaccinated?**Title****Why You Should Vaccinate Your Kids****Author's Name**

sample essay for student use by Trudy Morgan-Cole

**Paragraph One:**  
*Introduction**Three reasons for  
my opinion***Thesis statement**

Since Edward Jenner introduced the first successful smallpox vaccine by injecting an eight-year-old boy with cowpox pus in 1796, vaccines have been an important part of public health care around the world ("Edward Jenner"). Yet today, many parents choose not to vaccinate their children. Because vaccines are widely supported by research, have few side effects, and have proven successful in halting the spread of disease, I believe it is important that all parents continue to vaccinate their children.

**Paragraph Two:**  
*Develops the first  
reason by giving  
examples**Topic Sentence*

All major health organizations, including the Centres for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, recommend vaccination. The value of vaccination is supported by research from around the world, and researchers are constantly working to improve the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Epidemiologists, the scientists whose job is to study the outbreak of disease, all recommend vaccination.

**Paragraph Three:**  
*Topic Sentence**Develops the  
second reason,  
giving facts and  
statistics to support  
the statement.*

Many parents worry about the safety of vaccines. While side effects do occur, they are usually minor, like redness or swelling around the site of an injection. In Canada, only about one in a million doses of vaccine leads to serious side effects ("Fact and Fiction"). The most famous study linking vaccines to autism, one which got many parents worried about vaccination, has been proven false and the doctor who conducted the study has had his medical license taken away (Triggle).

**Paragraph Four:**  
*Topic sentence**Develops third  
reason, giving an  
example*

Around the world, increased vaccination leads to better public health. Diseases like smallpox and polio which once killed and disabled millions of people are virtually unknown today thanks to immunization programs. Yet in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan where the Taliban discourage immunization, rates of polio are on the rise again (Nordland).

**Paragraph**

If and when you have children, please get them vaccinated. The risks are minimal and you'll not only be following the best advice of medical science and protecting your own child from disease; you'll

*Five: Conclusion*  
*Restatement of*  
*thesis*  
*Summary of*  
*reasons*

be helping in the fight to eradicate infectious diseases in your community and around the world.

#### **Sources Cited**

"Edward Jenner (1749-1823)," BBC History: Historic Figures. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/jenner\\_edward.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/jenner_edward.shtml)

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Nordland, Rod, "After Year of Decline, Polio Cases in Afghanistan Triple in a Year." *The New York Times*, Jan. 17, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/18/world/asia/after-years-of-decline-polio-cases-in-afghanistan-rise.html>

Triggle, Nick, "MMR Doctor Struck from Register," BBC News. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8695267.stm>