**Why Your Kid Needs to Write Essays**

**Essays Teach Real World Lessons**

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Why do you write essays? Why do they put you through the torture of writing in school?

First let me offer my voice of experience. I have been a professional speechwriter for over 20 years and I know that top executives often judge you by your writing. Once, when I finished interviewing a CEO for a speech I was writing, he walked to his desk and pulled out a file. Then he said, "I have over 5,000 employees and there is no way I can keep track of all of them. But I can tell a lot about a person's thought process, by what they write and how they write it. "

He showed me the file and it was full of emails and letters and reports from employees.

The CEO said "I do see a lot of writing. And when I see a well-written document that reflects a good thought process and the ability to put ideas into action, I put that document in the folder and tell my managers to watch that person."

The point , I know, is obvious. People, even CEOs, judge us and our thought process by how we put words on paper, on how we logically develop our ideas, how we back up our ideas.

That takes us back to the importance of writing essays. Here is a secret that they never tell you. It is not about writing essays, it is about developing a thought process that shows you are an educated human being. When you graduate from high school or college, the least an employer expects is that you can clearly articulate your opinions and communicate ideas to fellow workers, customers and your bosses.

Remember that thesis statement they kept pounding in your head. A thesis statement merely tells what your paper will cover. For instance, you are arguing for the drinking age to be lowered to 18. Your thesis statement will say: The drinking age should be lowered to 18 because the current law is giving too many kids a criminal record, does not take into account the maturity of 18 year olds, and wastes law enforcement resources which could be better allocated somewhere else.

And then the rest of your paper will back up these arguments.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So what? You have heard that nonsense about a thesis statement before.

Okay - think about this. You want a raise. You are not just going to storm into your boss's office and demand a raise. Well, you could but that wouldn't do much except get you thrown out on your butt. You need to go in and have logical arguments prepared and be ready to back up each argument.

Whoops - that sounds a lot like an essay. And a thesis statement.

So before you go into your boss's office you have a thesis statement prepared. "I deserve a raise because I have increased sales by 20 percent, improved the company's efficiency by 10 percent and ...."

Well you get the idea. And remember what else essays teach you. Be prepared to back up each statement you make in the thesis statement. So when you offer your boss reasons for giving you a raise - guess what. He expects you to back them up.

Two more quick examples of how a thesis statement can help you in the real world. Applying for a job? Write a thesis statement explaining why you are the best person for the job and have examples to back it up. Selling a product? Write a thesis statement explaining the benefits of your product and, again, be able to back the benefits up.

Yes, a thesis statement teaches you to think logically.

Okay - but why does your teacher keep saying, "Where are your sources, where are your sources..?" Obviously, just to annoy you.

Hmm maybe not?

Think about this. What are your main criteria for choosing a mechanic, a doctor, dentist, and accountant? Yes - you know you can trust them. All good [relationships](http://voices.yahoo.com/theme/1394/relationships.html) start with trust. It is the same with a writer and a reader. Before a reader will trust you, you must convince them "you know your stuff." And this convincing depends on sound research, credible sources and good citations, so the reader can double-check if they want to.

APA or [MLA](http://voices.yahoo.com/topic/40805/mla.html) is not about leaning a system, heck; you may never use APA again. APA does force you to carefully document your sources and to leave a "paper trail" that your readers can follow. That is a valuable skill that every manager must have. Sad to say, try firing an employee without careful documentation. Say you develop a new product and some gets injured by it. You better have exact documentation that stows the product as safety tested and retested.

What I am saying, we live in a very litigious society and as a manger to protect yourself and your company, you better learn the importance of credible sources and documenting them correctly/

Hey - that is the skill APA and MLA style teaches!

Another example, if a CEO gives a speech (and as a speechwriter, I have seen this happen) and he makes as statement, tosses out a few statistics, you better be able to confirm that stat is right and you can confirm the sources.

To show how important accuracy is, President Obama once claimed that if you took America's Muslin population it would make "one of the largest Muslim countries in the world."

Ow! The next day the press was all over that stat and pointed out that "The most generous estimates put America's Muslim population at about 8 million, which would barely place the U.S. in the top 42 Muslim countries"

Some final thoughts. Your teacher gets upset when your essay is late, because you must learn to write under pressure and to deliver the product on time. If you boss wants the weekly report on her desk every Wednesday, but you toss it on her desk two days late, guess what. That is a good way to get fired.

And remember that life is about selling ideas. We are always selling ideas - to our spouses, our kids, our family, our bosses. And the best way to sell any idea is to get a thesis statement that clearly explains the key points of your ideas and then back up the key points.

A simple example. You are trying to convince your wife that you need a new boat. Good luck on that one.

Seriously you can line up your arguments by saying, A boat will provide quality family time for us and the kids, it will offer us a cheap vacation every weekend and you can use it to take potential clients on a nice cruise around the lake.

Hey that sounds like a thesis statement!

Hmm, maybe there is something to all this essay writing.