Opinion Essay

An opinion essay tells what the writer thinks or feels about a topic. People have different opinions about things. In an opinion essay, you write your opinion about a topic.

When you write an opinion essay, you choose a topic about which you have strong feelings. You support your opinion with reasons. For this Unit Project, you are going to write an opinion essay about the wetlands of Mississippi.

Writing Process

Part I: Prewriting

Ideas As you learned in Unit 1, Mississippi has wetlands in the northwestern part of the state. Some people have opinions about the importance of wetlands, protecting existing wetlands, and protecting the species that live in wetlands. All of these can be ideas for an opinion essay.

Write Mississippi's wetlands in the center of the idea organizer below. Brainstorm topics and write them on the lines. You can add more lines. Then choose your topic. Make sure you have reasons to support your opinion. If you don’t have several good reasons, you might want to choose another topic.
Voice In an opinion essay, you are telling how you really think and feel about a subject. Let the audience hear your voice. It should be strong and confident. Use strong words and details.

Organization Use a chart like the one below to organize your opinion essay. Write your opinion in the top box. In the second row of boxes, write the reasons why you feel or think the way you do. In the last row of boxes, write details, such as examples, that support your reasons.

Here are examples of an opinion, a reason, and details:

Opinion:  People should spend more time playing sports.
Reason:  Playing sports is healthy.
Details:  It helps you sleep better. It helps protect you against some illnesses.

Be sure to fill in the boxes before you go on to the next step.
Research  Once you have chosen a topic and started your organization chart, you can begin your research. One way to do research for an opinion essay is to interview other people. Interviews will give you information you may not have thought about.

When you interview others, you will ask them questions and write down their answers. Follow these tips:

• Ask some experts, teachers, or family members whether you can interview them.

• Prepare several questions about your topic before the interview. Suppose your opinion is “Mississippi’s wetlands are important.” Here are some examples of questions you could ask:
  1. What are Mississippi’s wetlands like?
  2. What do they teach us about our state?
  3. Do you think that they are important?
  4. What is your main reason for your opinion?
  5. What is another reason?

• Leave space after each question for writing notes during the interview.

• During the interview, listen closely to what the person is saying. You may find that the person has the same opinion that you have. Or you may find that the person has a different opinion.

• Take notes as you hear the answers. You don’t need to write down every word that is said.

• If you don’t understand something the person says, ask more questions about it.

• After the interview, review your notes. If the person has the same opinion as you, add any new reasons and details to your organization chart.

• If the person has a different opinion and changes your mind, make a new chart. Write in the chart your new opinion, reasons, and details.
Part II: Drafting

After your interviews, it’s time to write a first draft of your opinion essay. Look at your organizational chart. Use the information from the chart to write your essay. Make sure your opinion is supported by your reasons. Don’t worry about spelling or punctuation. You can fix any errors when you revise your final draft. Concentrate on getting your ideas down on paper.

Write your introduction. State your opinion and try to hook the readers’ attention right away. Look at these examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weak Opening</th>
<th>Strong Opening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think Mississippi’s wetlands are very important.</td>
<td>Mississippi’s wetlands help prevent floods and provide homes for animals and plants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write the body of your essay. Tell why you think your opinion is correct. Begin a new paragraph for each reason. Write a main-idea sentence for each paragraph that states the reason. Then use at least two supporting details for each reason.

Write a conclusion. Sum up your important points. End in a way that your reader will remember. Look at these examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weak Closing</th>
<th>Strong Closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi’s wetlands should be preserved.</td>
<td>Preserving Mississippi’s wetlands will show future generations that we cared about our environment and about them. We protected wonderful animals and plants that help make our state special.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part III: Revising

Reread your first draft. Did you state your opinion clearly? Did you include good reasons for your opinion? Did you support your reasons with details? Does your opening catch a reader's attention? Is your conclusion strong?

**Word Choice**  Think about the words you used. Use synonyms to replace words you use too often. Synonyms are words with the same or nearly the same meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Without Synonyms</th>
<th>With Synonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that wetlands are important.</td>
<td>I feel that wetlands are valuable for Mississippi. They provide land for wildlife, which I believe is essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have land for animals, which I think is important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sentence Fluency**  To keep your writing interesting for your readers, begin sentences in different ways.

- Mississippi's wetlands are beautiful treasures.
- In the South, there are beautiful wetlands.
- When you travel, be sure to visit Mississippi's beautiful wetlands.
Part IV: Proofreading and Publishing

Conventions  After you revise your story, proofread it.

- Are all the words spelled correctly?
- Did you capitalize all proper nouns?
- Did you indent every paragraph?
- Did you use commas and other punctuation correctly?
- Are all of your sentences complete sentences?

Fix any mistakes you find. Then publish your story by writing a final copy. Share your opinion essay with other students by reading it aloud to the class or a small group.

Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing an Opinion Essay</th>
<th>I did great!</th>
<th>I could do better.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wrote a strong beginning that states my opinion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My opinion essay states the reasons for my point of view.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My reasons are supported with details.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wrote a paragraph for each reason and its supporting details.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My writing sounds like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My conclusion is strong.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used synonyms for words I use too often.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I began sentences in different ways.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made very few mistakes in capitalization, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>