



## WRITING A PROBLEM-SOLUTION ESSAY

Problem-solution essays describe a problematic situation and ways to solve it. They may explain causes and/or effects of a problem. In addition, they usually emphasize the writer's opinion or advice about which solutions to the problem are the best.

Your essay will use the following pattern:

<b>Paragraph 1</b>	Introduction to the problem + Thesis Statement
<b>Paragraph 2</b>	Problem: Reasons Why It is serious
<b>Paragraph 3</b>	Solutions to Take and How to Follow Them
<b>Paragraph 4</b>	Conclusion

### STEP 1. PREWRITING

The prewriting step includes brainstorming about the problem. *Why is it a problem? What are its causes and effects?* For example, if your topic is smoking among young people, you might ask yourself: *Why is smoking bad for teens? Why do they do it? What effects does it have on their health? What are the best, most effective ways to prevent or stop teens from smoking?*

### STEP 2. WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

#### THE INTRODUCTION

In a problem-solution essay, the introduction usually gives background information about the problem, for example, why it happens, who it affects, and when or where it occurs. It may also describe how people feel about the problem and/or define key words people use to discuss it.

##### Introduction

- Background Information
- Thesis Statement:
  - *explanation of the problem*
  - *hints about the solutions*

#### EXAMPLE

**Task:** Not getting enough exercise

#### Background Information

Doing exercise is important to stay healthy, but fewer and fewer people are able to exercise regularly. This is especially true for adults. Adults often complain that they do not have enough time to follow a daily fitness, or exercise, routine because of their many work, school, or family responsibilities. On the other hand, doctors tell us that regular exercise is essential to keeping our bodies healthy and working properly. Not getting enough exercise can lead to poor health, but there are some simple steps people can take to increase their physical activity.

The thesis statement briefly describes the topic and gives the controlling idea. The controlling idea explains why something is a problem and hints at the possible solutions you will present in the body of your essay. The thesis statement may be one sentence or two sentences.



<i>topic</i>	<i>why it is a problem</i>	<i>hints at solutions</i>
Not getting enough exercise	can lead to poor health,	but there are some simple steps people can take to increase their physical activity.

## THE BODY

In a problem-solution essay, you begin by convincing your reader that a problem exists and is serious. You then give one or more solutions to the problem. There are many ways to structure a problem-solution essay. One of the simplest ways is to present the problem in detail in the first body paragraph and give the solutions in the second paragraph.

Your essay will use the following body pattern:

<b>Paragraph 2</b>	Problem: Reasons Why It is serious
<b>Paragraph 3</b>	Solution(s): Steps to Take and How to Follow Them

### The Body Paragraphs

- Topic Sentences
- Development and Support:
  - *Cause-Effect Transition Words*

## Writing Topic Sentences

As you learned previously, each body paragraph must have a clearly stated controlling idea. In a problem-solution essay, the topic sentences introduce the writer's focus on reasons for the problems and ways to solve or prevent them. In a four-paragraph essay, writers often indicate their transition from problems to solutions in the second paragraph. Here is an example of a thesis statement and two topic sentences for a problem-solution essay. Notice how the three sentences are connected to each other.

EXAMPLE:

**Thesis Statement:** Not getting enough exercise can lead to poor health, but there are some simple steps people can take to increase their physical activity.

**Topic Sentence 1:** There are two major reasons why not exercising causes problems for people.

**Topic Sentence 2:** To increase the activity levels, adults can find both practical and creative solutions.

<i>transition from problem to solution</i>	
To increase their activity levels,	adults can find both practical and creative solutions.

## Developing a Body Paragraph about a Problem

As you learned, writers support their body paragraphs with various kinds of evidence, including reasons, facts, examples, and explanations. For a paragraph about a problem, writers can include specific reasons why their problem is serious using listing-order transition signals like *first (of all)*, *second (of all)*, *in*



*addition*, and *finally* to introduce each reason. To end the body paragraph, some writers add a sentence that summarizes the reasons for the problem, this is optional.

#### EXAMPLE:

There are two major reasons why not exercising causes problems for people. **First of all**, it can make our muscles weaker. When people do not exercise, their muscles lose strength. **Consequently**, people can get hurt more easily when they lift heavy objects or run quickly. **Due to inactivity**, people are more likely to harm muscles when stretching their bodies. **In addition**, a lack of physical activity is bad for the heart. The heart is also a muscle. **As a result**, it needs to be exercised. People who do not increase their heart rate regularly with moderate exercise have weaker hearts. **Because of this**, they can be at a greater risk for heart problems. If people do not exercise at all, all of their muscles will suffer.

When writers discuss a problem, they may use cause-effect transition words, including the ones in the table, to show how one action or situation affects another.

Causes	Effects
as a result of	as a result
because of	consequently
due to	therefore
	thus

#### Developing a Body Paragraph about Solutions

In a problem-solution essay, the second body paragraph can offer solutions to the problem. As in the first body paragraph, writers often use listing-order transition words to introduce their specific solutions or suggestions. The supporting sentences may give steps on how to follow the solutions or provide reasons why the solutions are useful or important to follow.

#### EXAMPLE:

To increase their activity levels, adults can find both practical and creative solutions. **First of all**, they can make choices throughout the day to exercise the body more. For instance, instead of riding the elevator, people can take the stairs to get their muscles working. If people live close to a supermarket, they can choose to walk instead of driving. **Second of all**, people can stick to a short but regular exercise routine. When adults finish work, they can exercise before relaxing on the couch. For example, they might take a short walk around the neighbourhood. There are many easy ways for people to exercise more; it just takes a little planning and creativity.

#### THE CONCLUSION

As you learned previously, you will return to the thesis statement in your conclusion and express your final thoughts and recommendations.

Here are two strategies you might want to use to end your problem-solution essay about a specific health condition, bad habit, or environmental hazard.

1. Add a final observation about how people view the problem.
2. Make a "call for action" that asks people to do something to help solve the problem.



### Conclusion

- Restated Thesis
- Final Observation
- Call for Action

### EXAMPLE:

In order to increase physical activity, adults should find practical and creative ways to exercise more regularly. (*restated thesis*) Although many adults complain that they are too busy to exercise, they need to realize the enormous benefits that come from doing just a little bit each day. (*observation*) Adults should figure out a simple way to add regular exercise to their daily routine by reviewing and rearranging some of their day-to-day activities. (*call for action*)

### STEP 3. REVISING AND EDITING

Revising and editing your work is an essential part of the writing process. This is your opportunity to be sure that your essay has all the important pieces, and it is clear.

To revise and edit your first draft, you may use the Revising and Editing Checklist below.

#### Revising and Editing Checklist

Did you ...

- -give enough background information in your introduction?
- -express your controlling idea in the thesis statement?
- -present the problem clearly in your first body paragraph?
- -give two convincing solutions to the problem in your second body paragraph?
- -use a variety of transition words to connect your sentences and paragraphs?
- -use pronouns to make your writing flow more smoothly?
- -restate the controlling idea of your essay in your conclusion?
- -use an effective concluding strategy?
- -use correct verb forms, punctuation, and spelling?
- -use phrasal verbs correctly?
- -use pronouns and other words correctly?
- -give your essay a good title?

### STEP 4. PREPARING THE FINAL DRAFT

After receiving feedback from the teacher, you prepare a clean copy of the final draft of your essay and hand it in to your teacher.



## SAMPLE PROBLEM-SOLUTION ESSAY 1

You have read parts of this problem-solution essay already. Now read the entire essay to see how the parts fit together.

### Practical Ways to Stay Active

Doing exercise is important to stay healthy, but fewer people are able to exercise regularly. This is especially true for adults. Adults often complain that they do not have enough time to follow a daily exercise routine because of their many work, school, or family responsibilities. On the other hand, doctors tell us that regular exercise is essential to keeping our bodies healthy and working properly. Not getting enough exercise can lead to poor health, but there are some simple steps people can take to increase their physical activity.

There are two major reasons why not exercising causes problems for people. First of all, it can make our muscles weaker. When people do not exercise, their muscles lose strength. Consequently, people can get hurt more easily when they lift heavy objects or run quickly. Due to inactivity, people are more likely to harm muscles when stretching their bodies. In addition, a lack of physical activity is bad for the heart. The heart is also a muscle. As a result, it needs to be exercised. People who do not increase their heart rate regularly with moderate exercise have weaker hearts. Because of this, they can be at a greater risk for heart problems. If people do not exercise at all, all of their muscles will suffer.

To increase their activity levels, adults can find both practical and creative solutions. First of all, they can make choices throughout the day to exercise the body more. For instance, instead of riding the elevator, people can take the stairs to get their muscles working. If people live close to a supermarket, they can choose to walk instead of driving. Second of all, people can stick to a short but regular exercise routine. When adults finish work, they can exercise before relaxing on the couch. For example, they might take a short walk around the neighbourhood. There are many easy ways for people to exercise more; it just takes a little planning and creativity.

In order to increase physical activity, adults should find practical and creative ways to exercise more regularly. (*restated thesis*) Although many adults complain that they are too busy to exercise, they need to realize the enormous benefits that come from doing just a little bit each day. (*observation*) Adults should figure out a simple way to add regular exercise to their daily routine by reviewing and rearranging some of their day-to-day activities. (*call for action*)  
(394 words)

## SAMPLE PROBLEM-SOLUTION ESSAY 2

**Task:** Too much sun exposure

### The Importance of Healthy Habits

Every time people go outside, they are exposed to the sun. Sun exposure means not being protected from the sun's rays. A little sun can benefit the skin, but too much exposure can lead to skin damage and even skin cancer. Because serious effects don't appear until much later in life, people often ignore the health warnings about sun exposure. Experts say that overexposure to the sun is a real problem. Sun exposure can seriously affect people's health; however, people can deal with the hazards of sun in several ways.

Exposing yourself to too much sun can be harmful for several reasons. Fair-skinned people can get sunburned. Our skin is sensitive to sunlight, and without protection, it can turn red and become painful.



Sunburns can be uncomfortable and damage the skin. Moreover, excessive sun exposure can lead to health issues later in life. When your skin gets damaged over years, it can't heal itself. As a result, people who've had lots of sunburns may develop more wrinkles as they age. Additionally, studies have found that sunbathing increases the risk of skin cancer. So, spending too much time in the sun can cause both mild and serious health problems.

Despite these problems, there are ways for people to protect their skin from the sun and repair damage. First, it's important to use sunscreen to keep your skin healthy. Sunscreen has special chemicals that prevent sunburn. Using sunscreen is a must when you're out in the sun for a long time, like when you're sunbathing, or going for a walk. Second, if you already have sun-damaged skin, you can take steps to fix it. The easiest way is to eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables. They have vitamins that help your body repair and strengthen your skin. Using lotions with vitamin A can help heal sunburned skin.

In summary, there are many ways to avoid and reduce the problems caused by too much sun exposure. Most people know that too much sun can lead to sunburns, wrinkles, and even cancer. However, some still don't take care of their skin. It's crucial for people to be more aware of the risks of sun exposure. They should use sunscreen whenever they're outside for a while and eat fruits and vegetables to keep their skin healthy.

*(382 words)*

## **WRITING TASK**

**Choose one of the topics below to write a well-organised problem-solution essay within 300-350 words.**

1. Many people have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep for an adequate amount of time.
2. Not getting enough sleep can cause health problems.
3. Second-hand smoking is hazardous.
4. Many people are addicted to their digital devices.
5. People eat less healthy food.
6. Students' concentration decreases in class.
7. Many large cities around the world have high rates of crime.

*taken and adapted*