

Writing the First Paragraph

Purpose: Learn the 1-2-3 Paragraph Format to start an essay.

Here is the first paragraph of an essay. The paragraph has three parts.

First paragraph of an essay.

(1) In my country, there is a long and serious debate about the best place to grow up as a kid. (2) Some people say it is better for children to grow up in the countryside because rural areas provide safe streets to play and a clean environment. Other people argue that the city is a better place to raise a family because urban centers have more choices for entertainment and education. Both places have advantages and disadvantages to be sure. (3) In my opinion, the city is a better place to raise a child because of personal, academic and professional reasons.

Three paragraph parts.

1. The first sentence tells the reader the topic. This sentence says there are two different opinions about the best place to raise children.
2. The second and third sentences briefly explain the two different points of view. There is no detail. It's just a summary.
3. This is the last sentence of the paragraph. This sentence explains your opinion. This is your thesis.

Summary of the 1-2-3 Paragraph Format

- First one or two sentences introduce the topic and say there are two different opinions about a subject.
- Next two sentences briefly describe the two opinions.
- Final one or two sentences explain your idea. This is your thesis, or main idea.

Your Turn

Here are three essay topics. Can you use write the first paragraph for each question using the 1-2-3 Paragraph Format?

1. If you had a choice, would you buy a house or start a business?
2. Should schools purchase computers or books?
3. It is better to talk with people in person than to use other forms of communication, such as the telephone or email. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

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Sample answers using the 1-2-3 Paragraph Format

1. If you had a choice, would you buy a house or start a business?

Investing for the future is an important decision for university graduates who want to prepare for their retirement. The question for people with little investment experience is this: invest in what? For many investors, there are two options. Some people say buying real estate, like a home, is the best choice. Other people say that young people who are not afraid of risk should invest in a business. In my opinion, investing in a home is the best choice. My decision is based on personal, financial and professional reasons.

2. Should schools purchase computers or books?

In today's tough economic climate, university leaders don't have enough money to buy all of the services, supplies and equipment they need to support student learning. In particular, some schools must choose between buying books for the library or new computers. Some people argue books are more important because they are the traditional way for students to learn and become educated. Other people say computers are the new way of learning and therefore should receive more funding. I believe schools should purchase books before computers. My opinion is based on personal, intellectual and professional reasons.

3. It is better to talk with people in person than to use other forms of communication, such as the telephone or email. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Modern technology has changed the speed and form of communication. People who admire these technical changes say communication has improved because of the instant access via email, chat forums and email to almost every corner of the globe. Traditional thinkers suggest change is not always better and that truly effective communication needs to be face to face. I agree with the latter point. The bases for my opinion are intellectual, social and professional.