How to Write a One-Page Response

NOTE: You do NOT need to have a heading on each response assignment. You do NOT have to include a line for your name. The student name is automatically indicated in the instructor’s grade center when grading an assignment. Even a line for a name takes up valuable space for a one-page response. All one-page responses are double-spaced, 11 or 12 point font.

Thesis Statement – This should be a one-sentence statement of the position you take on the question or the argument you intend to make. This statement should specifically lay out what you intend to prove in your response. It should not be a vague generalization.

First paragraph begins with a topic sentence that exactly corresponds to the first point you are trying to prove as stated in your thesis statement. Then, you present facts, details, and evidence to prove your point or analysis. The paragraph should end with a good transition sentence.

Subsequent paragraphs should begin with a topic sentence that corresponds to the second, third, etc. points you make in your thesis statement, corresponding exactly to the order in which you state them in your thesis statement. In each paragraph, present facts, details, and evidence in support of your argument. Each paragraph ends with a transition sentence.

Conclusion – This is where you restate your thesis and review the main points.

NOTE: Organization, flow, structure, grammar, and spelling checks are important.

Questions to ask before submitting an assignment:
1. Have you proofread your response?
2. Have you met the requirements of the assignment?
3. Does your thesis statement have a specific idea, debatable assertion, or argument?
4. Does your paper have supporting paragraphs to support and prove your thesis?
5. Does a topic sentence in each paragraph address the purpose of the paragraph?
6. Does each paragraph contain evidence, facts, and details to support your thesis argument?
7. Does your analysis explain the significance of the evidence, facts, or details and specifically connect to your thesis statement?
8. Do you have logical transitions between paragraphs?
9. Have you organized your ideas?
10. Does your conclusion restate your thesis statement and contain a review of your main points?
11. Have you maintained consistent verb tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, and sentence structure?
12. Do you use proper punctuation (no sentence fragments, run-on sentences, comma splices, or confusing passages) in your response paper?
13. Are there any spelling errors?

For more information or instruction, please go to a campus Writing Center, or use the SMART THINKING tutoring service: http://eli.nvcc.edu/smarthinking.htm
Thesis Statement - Arguing a Point

1. All thesis statements are really arguments. In an essay you are advancing and supporting a point of view.
2. Argument is about persuading a reader to take a side on an issue.
3. An argument is an organized series of facts and material to support a point of view.
4. Arguments support opinions.
5. Arguments are not right or wrong, but graded on the basis of being well or poorly supported.
6. A well-written argument essay should use clear, logical reasoning to persuade.
7. Argument should always focus on facts, not emotions.

Compare these two thesis statements:
The Cold War is an example of a bipolar system, lasting from 1945 to 1989.
The Cold War period was a relatively stable era in the international system due to deterrence strategy.
Note the difference in implied intent in these two statements.
One expresses a point of view; the other advances a position.

Be aware of your audience—open-minded, but skeptical and critical.
Audience does not turn its brains off when it reads or listens to an argument.

Example:
The United Nations should be able to tell the United States what it can and can’t do internationally.
List arguments in favor of this statement
List arguments against this statement
Note that your reader will be perfectly capable of generating reasons to support the side opposite the side you take.
You need to anticipate and defuse opposing arguments.

Steps to Writing a Thesis Statement
1. Choose a topic of interest.
2. Focus your topic on a specific point or aspect of the issue of interest that you feel you can support.
3. A method of narrowing a topic is to define your terms.
4. List reasons in support of your thesis.
5. List reasons in opposition to your thesis.
6. Group the reasons by issue details or subject areas.
7. Organize the issue details.
8. Save the most powerful issue/argument as your last point.

This step-by-step process will help you write a strong, focused thesis statement.

When you incorporate material or direct quotes from outside source materials, you must site that source giving credit to the author or source of the material or quote.

An excellent resource is:

Some things to remember:
1. Select focused passages to quote or paraphrase in support of your argument.
2. It is your job to “unwrap” the quote. It doesn’t stand alone as proof. You must explain why it is significant to your argument.
3. Quotes should be “woven” into the fabric of your essay. It should connect to the material.
4. You are the author, the dominant voice. The quote is there to support your thesis.
5. Do not sprinkle your essay with unexplained quotations.
6. Introduce your quotations by naming the source.
7. Tell the reader the significance, or the reason for your reference.
8. A direct quotation must be copied exactly as it appears in the original work, with every mark of punctuation, every capitalization, every peculiarity of spelling preserved.
9. You must as a matter of honor use the quote in its proper context, and respect the intended meaning.

How to Incorporate Outside Sources into Your Writing

**Summary** – If a long passage supports your argument, you may condense the main idea and edit the supports used in your own words.

*Note:* A good summary is accurate, comprehensive, and independent (in the order of the points in the original document and of the emphasis of the original document).

**Paraphrase** – This is restating the content of a short passage of material phrase by phrase. You rewrite the author’s wording choice in your own words.

*Note:* Why would you paraphrase instead of directly quote the material?
Sometimes a great point for your argument is written in difficult language that serves you better if simplified.
Sometimes a passage or an idea is very important to your argument, but it isn’t necessary or desired to use the author’s exact wording.

**Direct Quotation** – This is a precise word-for-word use of the author’s original statement.

*Note:* Too many quotes dilute the overall effectiveness of your essay. Quotations should be used sparingly to make great impact.
Quotes must be accurate.
As a general rule, no more than 10 to 20 percent of your essay should be composed of direct quotations.

When to Use Direct Quotations
1. When you want to use precise, excellently written language, as well selected content in the quote. In short, when, as a writer, you believe that no other words could adequately express the meaning conveyed. Usually the style is perfect, vivid, and cannot be improved upon.
2. To ensure the greatest accuracy for material that is significant, or controversial, or authoritative.
3. To set up an argument that adds to, or takes exception to the quoted source.
4. Like in a debate, when the contrast of opposing ideas makes precise wording of the author’s ideas essential to your argument.

**When You Use Too Many Quotes**

- It makes your essay appear to have no purpose—it looks like you added everything verbatim in hopes of finding a purpose.
- To pad the length of an essay because you failed to adequately develop a topic.
- There is always the possibility that you don’t know anything about your topic, so you quote others.

Remember that quotations supplement, but can never replace your work.

**Purpose of Quotations**

1. To help you amplify or clarify a point of argument.
2. To prove a specific point, or to attach weight to a theory or an opinion.

**Format of Quotations**

1. Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes.
2. Set off long quotations (4 or more lines) by indenting 10 spaces from the left margin.
3. Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.
4. Use quotation marks around titles of short works or italicize.

1. Periods and commas always come inside quotation marks; all other punctuation (unless part of the quoted material) belongs outside the quotation marks.
2. If the quoted material and the entire sentence you write each require the same mark of punctuation, use only the mark that comes first. If the punctuation marks are different, use the stronger mark.
3. When quoting a complete sentence, capitalize the first word.
4. Do not capitalize the first word if you are quoting a fragment, or if you are introducing a short complete sentence with a similar construction.
5. Capitalize when you introduce quoted material.

**Plagiarism**

Using another author’s ideas, interpretations, or words as your own is plagiarism. This is why you must cite your source with in-text documentation that includes a specific page reference.

A good way to introduce an outside source is to use a signal phrase alerting the reader that an outside reference follows. Such phrasing also helps integrate an idea or direct quotation into your writing and argument.

**Omissions**

Any material that isn’t essential to your argument maybe omitted. To do this properly, use the ellipses, (...) that are three spaced periods to indicate to the reader that some of the original material has been omitted. If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence, then use the three periods and any period marking or other punctuation that comes at the end of the sentence. Make sure that the quotation that remains is grammatically correct.

You must not distort the meaning of the original passage. Example: “The United States was attacked on 9-11 by terrorists, nineteen of whom were from Saudi Arabia.”

You cannot change it to read: “The United States was attacked...by...Saudi Arabia.”
Interpolations (Required Changes in Quotations)

These changes are made when it is necessary to relate a pronoun to its antecedent, or to insert a personal comment. To do this properly, you must insert the word “sic” – meaning a word of correction. You may also make the quotation grammatically consistent with what you have written surrounding the quotation. It’s important not to confuse your reader with a change in tone, tense, or perspective. All interpolations must be enclosed in square brackets, [ ].