

How to Write a Position (Opinion) Essay

Social studies courses often require you to write position or opinion essays. Taking and defending a position demonstrates your understanding of the course material and of the various perspectives surrounding an issue.

Writing an effective position essay involves meeting certain requirements.

Introduction:

After you have read the question and determined your position, in your introductory paragraph you need to

- demonstrate your understanding of the issue
- state your position clearly
- identify some of the alternate views on the issue
- indicate where you stand on the issue

Following is a sample introductory paragraph answering the question, “**To what extent are people and industries responsible for global warming?**”

Global warming is a serious threat to the quality of life of Canadians. Scientific evidence indicates that global warming could result in increased sea levels, which would threaten some coastal communities and could cause flooding. The destruction of ecosystems is another negative result of global warming. The prosperity, security, and well-being of Canadians may be affected negatively by global warming. Some people believe that the activities of humans and industries have caused this global warming. Others believe that global warming is a natural cycle that has been experienced on Earth many times previously. I believe that the actions of industries such as extracting oil and those of individuals such as consuming fossil fuels for vehicles and heating have contributed greatly to global warming.

Notice that the writer discussed the topic generally in the beginning of the paragraph. Then, the writer identified some **alternative views** on the issue. The writer has also taken a clear **position on the issue** at the end of this introductory paragraph.

Body:

The body of the essay is where you must **support your position**. This involves identifying and explaining your reasons as well as providing evidence such as facts, examples, and quotations to support your reasons.

The number of body paragraphs may vary. Generally, one to three body paragraphs are appropriate for Social Studies 9 position essays.

Following is a sample body paragraph to follow the introductory paragraph above:

The actions of industries and individuals are largely responsible for global warming. Industries such as mineral and oil extraction, manufacturing, and logging require the burning of large amounts of fossil fuels such as gasoline, oil, coal, and natural gas. Burning these fuels emits carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere. The carbon dioxide traps the heat from the sun, which causes the temperature of the atmosphere to increase. As carbon dioxide levels increase with more economic activity, the temperature continues to rise. Individuals contribute to the increased carbon dioxide levels through the burning of fossil fuels for transportation (such as cars, buses, airplanes) and heating. As the world's population increases (and thus the number of vehicles and demand for heating also increase) and as nations strive for increased economic growth, industries and individuals will continue to contribute significantly to the problem of global warming.

Conclusion:

The concluding paragraph of your essay is your last chance to influence the reader. The two main functions of the concluding paragraph are to

- remind the reader what you are trying to prove (This is a re-statement of your position.)
- summarize your arguments

Aim to finish your essay in a meaningful way such as with a question or a prediction for the future.

The following sample is a concluding paragraph to follow the introduction and body paragraph given above:

The issue of global warming is a serious one. If the temperature of Earth continues to rise, serious repercussions such as more extreme weather, rising sea levels, and compromised ecosystems will occur. The continued burning of fossil fuels by industries and individuals, which greatly increases the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, is largely responsible for the temperature increase. Can the inhabitants of Earth survive if these actions by industries and individuals do not change?