



CREATING A BRIDGE BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE WRITING

## STANDARDS

### Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

*College-Ready Writing Essentials* is aligned with the Common Core State Standards for Writing in Grades 11 and 12.

*College-Ready Writing Essentials* addresses **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1**: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

This standard describes the essence of the project *College-Ready Writing Essentials* guides students to complete: a research-supported persuasive academic essay.

The image below shows the table of contents for *College-Ready Writing Essentials*'s 25 lessons. As the lesson titles indicate, students select a topic of their choice; research their topic using credible sources; identify a debatable issue within the topic, suitable for the task; map a range of perspectives on that debatable issue; define their own position on the issue, based on their analysis; construct an argument in support of their position; and draft, revise, and finalize a polished essay that conforms to the conventions of academic writing.

"Lesson 10: Outlining Your Essay" prompts students to outline a logical sequence of evidence-based claims in support of their position (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.A**).


Lessons 12-18 guide students through the process of drafting their argument, constructing and presenting a series of evidence-supported claims in a way that anticipates their readers' knowledge level, concerns, values, and potential biases (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.B**).


"Lesson 17: The Body - Addressing Counterarguments" is specifically devoted to counterclaims.


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
“Lesson 22: Self Review – Language” guides students in the use of language that creates fluency, cohesion, and clarity (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.C**). It also addresses questions of tone and style. The need to produce writing that conforms to academic conventions is emphasized throughout *College-Ready Writing Essentials* (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.D**). *College-Ready Writing Essentials* asks students to format their essay in MLA style but can readily be adapted to other styles as well.


“Lesson 19: The Conclusion” prompts students to compose a conclusion that follows from and extends their argument (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.E**).


























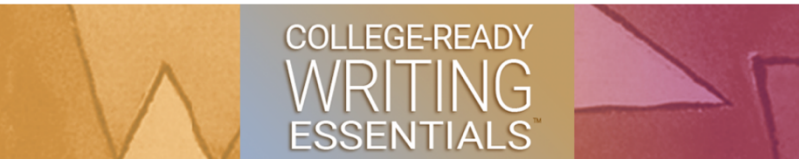




### College-Ready Writing Essentials



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*Creating a Bridge between High School and College Writing*

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[William Bryant, PhD](#) 

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## CREATING A BRIDGE BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE WRITING

### Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

*College-Ready Writing Essentials* was adopted by the Texas State Board of Education in 2020 for SY 2020–28. As part of the adoption process, the Texas Education Agency verified the alignment of *College-Ready Writing Essentials* with more than **50% of the English Language Arts TEKS for Grades 11 and 12**. In addition, TEA verified *College-Ready Writing Essentials*'s alignment with **100% of the Texas English Learner Proficiency Standards**.

BetterRhetor will be pleased to provide any interested party with a list of the aligned TEKS.

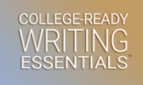
As an example of *College-Ready Writing Essentials*'s TEKS alignment, consider **English IV TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading (9)(B)(vi)**: *The student is expected to develop drafts into a coherent piece of writing in open-ended situations by using strategic organizational structures appropriate to purpose.*

*College-Ready Writing Essentials* aligns with this TEKS standard in "Lesson 13: The Introduction" (and elsewhere, as well). The image below, taken from the *College-Ready Writing Essentials* lesson, demonstrates how *College-Ready Writing Essentials* prompts students to use a strategic organizational structure to compose an introduction to their essay. Their introduction 1) introduces their topic; 2) conveys the significance of their topic; 3) defines the debatable issue that serves as the focus of their essay; and 4) signals to the reader the writer's own position on the issue, that is, the thesis they will explain and render persuasive.

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### Lesson 13: The Introduction

CRWE | Lesson 13: The Introduction (DRAFTING)



A good essay's introduction does a lot of important work, so it is essential that you craft it thoughtfully.

You must put yourself in a reader's position, asking what a reader must understand right from the start in order to follow along with you as you lead them through your **line of thinking**.

#### Topic, Issue, and Position

As you saw in constructing your outline, your reader needs:

- An introduction to the **topic** and its **significance**;
- A clear definition of the specific **issue**;
- A statement of your **position**.

A good introduction can do other things as well, such as grabbing the reader's attention with a bold or intriguing opening; signaling to the reader the **general concern** associated with the specific issue; or guiding the reader into the next section of the essay.

But the basic elements—topic, issue, and position—give the reader the necessary foundation for following along with the rest of the essay, so a writer needs to provide these things upfront.

Your introduction must accomplish the necessary work, but how you construct your introduction is up to you.

Let's look carefully at the introduction of a student essay we've examined already, "A Bitter Cup of Coffee." This essay does some things well, but not everything.

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Info Box: Introduction - "A Bitter Cup of Coffee"

INTRODUCTION: "A BITTER CUP OF COFFEE"	
Student text	Commentary
<i>"The picture may seem familiar. Tumbling out of bed and stumbling around in the kitchen—you begin your day. But wait. It cannot begin properly without that daily ritual, the morning cup of coffee. The aroma swirls throughout the room. What can compare to the richness and fullness of that first cup of coffee?"</i>	This opening draws readers in with a vividly described, familiar scene. Combined with the title, "A Bitter Cup of Coffee," it signals to the reader that the <b>topic</b> is relevant to them personally, but that there may be something important that they don't know about it.
<i>Americans lead the world in coffee drinking, consuming an average of 3.4 cups per person per day (Pennybacker 18). Gourmet coffee houses are sprouting up all over the place.</i>	By calling attention to the prevalence of coffee in our society, the writer establishes the significance of the topic: readers should understand that the coming discussion is not a trivial matter. The citation, "(Pennybacker 18)," signals that the writer has done his research and is getting his information from credible sources. He's working to build our confidence in his reliability—his <b>ethos</b> .
<i>But what is the real story behind this dark brown liquid? Is it as innocent as it first seems—just a pleasant morning pick-me-up?</i>	After establishing the significance of coffee in American society, the writer skips a step in his line of thinking. What he implies, but fails to state, is, "Given coffee's prominent place in our lives, we should be concerned if it turns out that coffee isn't as benign as we believe."
<i>Unfortunately it isn't. Much of today's coffee is grown in such a way that it damages the environment,</i>	The writer introduces the tension inherent in the topic: A typical morning cup of coffee seems innocent enough, but it actually has a harmful impact on the world. This claim has an "unexpected" quality, which has the effect of intriguing the reader, increasing their curiosity—even creating a sense of urgency. The reader is motivated to read on.



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<i>although it has been proven that there are far less harmful methods.</i>	The writer begins to define the <b>specific issue</b> here. Unfortunately, the effort falls short. He should spell it out more explicitly: We enjoy our coffee without realizing that coffee cultivation is harming the natural environment. What should we do about that?  With this phrase, the writer also begins to suggest his <b>position</b> : that there are less harmful ways to grow coffee and that consumers should support them. He should state this more clearly and explicitly, so that readers better understand where the essay is leading.  This ends the introduction.
<i>Coffee grows only in the tropics, in Mexico, Central and Latin America, Indonesia, and Africa. The field must be at an altitude between 3000 and 5000 feet with a temperature between 65 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit. For optimum growth, coffee must have shade from nearby trees and overhead growth, but it also requires at least two hours of sunlight each day ("Shrinking Shadowland" 60). These are the only requirements necessary for coffee to grow well."</i>	The body of the essay begins here, with a more thorough discussion and analysis of the topic. The writer is wise to recognize that his reader needs some background information on how coffee grows in order to understand the problem.  The writer might have helped his reader follow his line of thinking by providing a transition from the introduction to the body, such as: "For all the coffee we drink, we're mostly unaware of where it comes from and how it is grown."




















"A Bitter Cup of Coffee"'s introduction is only partially successful.

On the plus side, it connects the reader personally to the topic and establishes coffee as something that merits examination. It gets across the topic's underlying tension: Coffee is something widely enjoyed, but it comes with a high cost to the natural environment. In addition, the writer uses some nice vivid language and shows some skill at building his reader's trust and attracting his reader's interest.

On the minus side, the writer skips some steps in his line of thinking, makes only somewhat clear the specific issue his essay will address. He also fails to clearly state his position. As a result, the reader is not entirely certain where the essay is headed.

We can learn much from this kind of close analysis of an essay. It helps us to see what works and what doesn't, so that we can construct our own essay with more skill.

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Below is a model for drafting an introduction for the essay on universal basic income. It's a draft, so it doesn't need to be polished yet: we won't worry about citations, for example, until later. For now, the task is to begin crafting language and ideas in a way that:

- 1) Makes sure the introduction does the work required; and
- 2) Leads the reader through a clear, focused line of thinking, with each part preparing the way for the next.

Example Box: Lesson 13 Writing Assignment - Drafting an Introduction

EXAMPLE	
Lesson 13: Writing Assignment - Drafting an Introduction	
<b>Essay:</b> Universal Basic Income	
<b>Introduce the TOPIC and its significance</b>	The idea of a society providing all of its members with a guaranteed income to meet their basic needs is not new but has gained increasing consideration in recent years. Business and technology leaders are exploring universal basic income (UBI) as a hedge against predicted mass unemployment resulting from the automation of jobs. At the same time, reformers on both the right and left are interested in UBI as a possible alternative to traditional welfare programs.  Experiments with UBI are currently underway around the world, from Kenya and India to Canada and California. The findings from these experiments could be world-changing. If UBI turns out to be viable, it could cushion the impact of the social and economic upheaval that many experts believe is all but inevitable for many millions of people.
<b>Clearly state the ISSUE</b>	The success or failure of UBI hinges on a question about human nature: Would the security and freedom resulting from a guaranteed income make people more inclined to create and be productive, or would it result in massive idleness and dependency?
<b>Clearly state your POSITION</b>	The current experiments with UBI are still a long way from providing answers. Until they do, we should be training and equipping more people to start their own businesses. Whether or not UBI succeeds, entrepreneurship offers at least a partial, perhaps a substantial, solution to the problems UBI is aimed at addressing.

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By carefully crafting an introduction this way, the writer gains much clarity on how to proceed with the rest of her essay. Her reader will be well prepared for the discussion that follows, and will begin to trust that this writer knows what she's doing.

This draft introduction draws upon text that has already been generated in the planning exercises. Drafting is in part a process of shaping your outline into fully developed sentences and paragraphs.

Draft and submit an introduction to your essay:

[Lesson 13: Writing Assignment - Drafting an Introduction](#)

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### Other States

In addition to Texas, *College-Ready Writing Essentials* is also on the list of instructional resources approved statewide by the Departments of Education in Utah and New Mexico.

**Read our White Paper:**

**[College-Ready Writing Essentials Whitepaper](#)**

**Questions/Contact:**

**[collegereadywriting@better-rhetor.com](mailto:collegereadywriting@better-rhetor.com)**

**Schedule a quick meeting to learn more:**

**<https://meetings.hubspot.com/rebecca-bryant>**

## ABOUT BETTER RHETOR

BetterRhetor is dedicated to closing the college-readiness gap by providing more students with effective instruction and authentic assessment. We place special emphasis on college-ready writing, since writing is a foundational skill essential for success across disciplines.

To help bridge the gap between pre-college and college-level writing, we have created *College-Ready Writing Essentials*, a teacher-facilitated, five-week instructional resource for use in high school and early college classrooms and programs.

*College-Ready Writing Essentials* was developed by BetterRhetor Co-Founder and President, William Bryant, PhD. Dr. Bryant has more than thirty years of experience as a writer, editor, and educator. Before launching BetterRhetor, he spent ten years in test development at ACT, Inc., lastly as Director of Writing Assessments. He has worked extensively with student writing, gaining a deep understanding of the college-ready writing gap and its causes.

*College-Ready Writing Essentials* reflects BetterRhetor's commitment to helping all students who want a college education succeed in their efforts, regardless of income or background.

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