

ESSAY OUTLINES

For an Exam – Part 2 (Organizing your ideas)

Once you have used brainstorming to generate some rough ideas, you now need to **organize them** into three separate ideas. These three ideas will form the topic sentences for your essay.

1. Step 1 – Group similar ideas together

Once you have brainstormed some ideas, ask whether certain ideas are part of the same group.

People should keep exotic pets.

- Personal enjoyment
- Personal benefit
- People will create a safe environment for a pet
- Iguanas are more expensive than most lizards
- People will be sensitive to other environments
- Pets kept in too confined of a space
- Some are endangered (helps keep them alive)
- Some species of birds that are otherwise endangered
- Education for the owner and public
- Companionship

Cross out irrelevant points

- Personal enjoyment
- Personal benefit
- People will create a safe environment for pet
- ~~• Iguanas more expensive than most lizards~~
- People will be sensitive to other environments
- ~~• Pets kept in too confined a space~~
- Some are endangered (helps keep them alive)
- Some species of birds that are otherwise endangered
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Group the list into three separate clusters based on key repeating terms

- Personal enjoyment
- Personal benefit
- Companionship

Key term repeated: “personal”

- People will create a safe environment for the pet
- Some pets are endangered (helps keep them alive)
- Some species of birds that are otherwise endangered

Key term repeated: “pets”

- Education for owner and public
- Public will be sensitive to other environments

Key term repeated: “public”



Step 2: Find Category Words

Categories summarize your specific points. They are the main points that your paragraphs will discuss. Category words are most effective when sub-points can support them.

Consider this sentence as a topic sentence: “The first reason people should keep exotic pets is that some younger people might enjoy the companionship of exotic lizards.” The point is too specific—what will you be able to write about? Not much. However, if we changed that topic statement to “The first reason people should keep exotic pets is that the owners will get the benefits of companionship” there are now numerous sub-points we can mention such as “better state of mind,” “a feeling of belonging,” or “health benefits.”

People should keep exotic pets.

- Personal enjoyment
- People will create a safe environment for the pet
- Public will be sensitive to other environments
- Some are endangered (helps keep the species alive)
- Education for public
- Companionship

To find some **category words**, think about the key ideas that repeat themselves. Notice that “pet owners” occurs in the rough work more than once. That’s a clue that one of your points concerns the pet owners. Now, what is being said about the pet owners? Notice that the specific points mention good things that happen to pet owners when they keep exotic pets. So, one of your categories could be that *the pet owners receive benefits*.

Now think to yourself, what else, or who else, receives benefits? Notice that people create a safe environment *for the pet*. Notice also that, though some pets are endangered, letting an owner keep an exotic pet *helps keep the pet’s species alive*. So, a second category could be *the pets will receive benefits*.

For the third **category**, think again, what else, or who else, will receive benefits? Are there any details that haven’t been summarized properly with our current category words?

What about “education for public” and “public will be sensitive to other environments”? Those details are definitely about benefits, but they don’t quite concern the owner or the pet specifically. There is a benefit for the larger public good. So, the third category becomes *the public will receive benefits*.

Our thesis becomes “*People should keep exotic pets because the pets will benefit, the owners will benefit, and the larger public will benefit.*”

Exercise 1: Find category words for the following rough work. Write a three-part thesis statement. Use lines to connect ideas. Cross out any that are repetitive. Feel free to add any of your own ideas in order to come up with new categories.

1) Laptops *should not be allowed in classrooms*.

- Students distracted by messenger programs
- Students distracted by games
- Not able to practice penmanship
- Students not able to learn
- Teachers will get angry and not be able to teach well

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- Teachers will feel less confident about their teaching
- There will be more laptops on campus so more of a possibility for theft on the campus
- People won't get to know each other in class and the community will suffer on campus

Category words: _____, _____,
_____.

Full thesis: _____

Exercise 2: Use the rough work strategies you have learned to develop a thesis for each of the following questions. Use an agree vs. disagree list if you aren't clear about how you feel about the topic.

1) Persuade a reader that homework should or should not be given out for high school students during the Christmas break.

Brainstorm:

Category words: _____, _____,
_____.

Thesis: _____
_____.