

TO: [REDACTED]
FROM: Kevin Folliard
DATE: 10-5-2016
SUBJECT: #91601, Short Essay for PRO 600



Congratulations on your progress in writing this assignment for PRO 600. I think your personal essay response is off to a good start, with a nice theme of service.

My name is **Kevin**, and it's my pleasure to work with you today. **Hold CTRL and click on the video to the right** for an extended welcome message!

Before we begin, let's review a few important guidelines and resources:

- Students may submit one request for advice (either written feedback or live online advising) every 48 hours.
- You are welcome to come to the Effective Writing Center for help at any stage in the writing process, whether you are just getting started an assignment or want feedback on a rough draft.
- Resources to help you revise your writing assignment are hyperlinked within this letter and in the [More Resources](#) section at the end.
- Before reading this advice, please review the writing that you submitted. We've pasted your draft at the end of this advice letter.



At the EWC we are attentive readers who help you improve as a writer by explaining and modeling effective writing skills. For a more detailed discussion of our services, please [click this link and visit the Effective Writing Center web site](#).

Are You Interested in More Help?

Schedule a Live Advising Appointment!

- The Effective Writing Center also offers live, online advising via teleconference. You can submit an appointment request through the [MyUMUC portal](#).

Attend an Online Workshop!

- The EWC hosts monthly live workshops in Google Hangouts. Our [complete calendar is available here](#).

Join the Google+ Community!

- Join the UMUC Effective Writing Center [Google+ community](#). Here, all UMUC students and faculty members can find resources to help students improve their writing. Whether you are a student who needs your paper reviewed or a faculty member who would like us to provide a guest lecture on writing for your class, the EWC is here to help. [Click here to join!](#)

Advice Overview

We will discuss the following strategies that can help you to strengthen your paper:

- I will offer tips on **building a strong opening/thesis for your personal essay**. I think a clearer overview of your personal belief will enhance the way you first engage your readers and lay a stronger foundation for the body of the essay.
- I will offer tips on **body paragraphs and conclusions**.
- I will also review tips on **proofreading for grammar, mechanics, and punctuation**.

Throughout my advice, you will notice that I copy/paste **text from your paper highlighted in yellow**, and may then show **corrections or suggested alterations in green**.

Although we will cover revisions and rules, **your professor's instructions always take precedence over any advice you receive from the EWC**. If you have any questions, refer to your assignment guidelines first and don't hesitate to ask your professor to clarify any unanswered questions.

Assignment Management

Thank you for submitting the assignment requirements. Our goal is to ensure that your paper meets your professor's assignment requirements as closely as possible, so this information is a big help!

Below is a table with an overview of your assignment, what you have completed, and what you need to fulfill the requirements.

Assignment Requires	You Have	You Need
Assignment: "Write a short essay that reflects your belief or passion about a particular part of your professional experience. This project will help you refresh your writing skills to prepare for the rest of your graduate program."	You have a thoughtful essay on your desire to serve others through your professional career.	<p>Good! Below, I will offer tips on strengthening your thesis and the various other sections of your paper.</p> <p>One tip I have is to try to keep this paper focused on you and your own professional experience. I think it is okay to mention sources of inspiration, but keep the central focus on how you have learned and lived this passion for service to others.</p>
APA Citations and Formatting	For a personal essay, you will likely not need outside research.	I will review APA below for good measure anyway. 😊

Thesis & Organization

Goals:

- Articulate your thesis, argument, main idea, and/or purpose clearly.
- Organize your document or presentation in a manner that promotes understanding.

Overall, your paper has a good central theme. Let's review a few pointers on thesis statements, and I'll offer tips on how you might build a stronger, more impactful thesis statement with your opening paragraph to bring out that theme a little more. 😊

THESIS:

A **thesis statement** is a one sentence declaration that shows us what your paper is about, and more importantly what it seeks to prove. Another, even simpler way to think about it is this:

Your **thesis** = the **topic** of your paper + **your position** on it!

Check out [this video](#) (hold control and click the link) on forming a thesis statement. Sometimes creating a thesis can sound intimidating, but at the end of the day all you are doing is expressing your position on the topic of your paper in a clear concise manner.

When writing persuasive papers, the more argumentative your thesis is, the better it is. The more declarative or matter of fact it is, the weaker it is. For example:

Smoking is an unhealthy and addictive habit.

This is a **weak thesis** because it is generally accepted that smoking is both unhealthy and addictive. It's not making a very strong argument because it is so easy to prove.

The tobacco industry will collapse because future generations will be more informed about the dangers of addiction.

This is a **strong thesis** because it is making a very specific claim, and the writer has his work cut out for him to find details that support his belief that the tobacco industry will not be supported by future generations.

The best thesis statements do the following:

- **Make a strong argument.**
- **Bring unity to your paper.**
- **Make your reader curious as to how your ideas will be proven later in your paper.**

A thesis is almost always one sentence long and almost always found at the very end of your first introductory paragraph. At the end of your intro, you state:

I believe that each person has one goal or primordial drive that steers the outcome of every major decision in their life. It is usually derived from our experiences early in life, but can also originate from our ancestor's traditions. My passion and drive is service – to others and/or for greater cause.

Again, the theme of “service to others” is a good one. I like that you open with a statement of belief, and I like that your belief becomes more concrete by the end of the paragraph. However, consider the following about the above paragraph:

- **Some of the language here is vague.** Try not to overuse pronouns like “it” to refer back to a nebulous idea. What is derived from experiences in life? The goal? The drive? The decisions? Also, what is the connection to ancestry here? That might be an interesting point, but it is not clearly enough defined for your thesis.
- Maybe to better define that idea of ancestry, you can **bring your own experience or influences into the claim.** For example, you can mention how your parents modeled service for you at a young age within the context of your thesis.
- Your passion for service is good, but your use of “**and/or**” makes it unclear. Might you be choosing not to serve one or the other? Just say “and.”

A revision might look more like this:

I believe that each person has one goal or primordial drive that steers the outcome of every major decision in his or her life. This goal is usually derived from our experiences or interests that formed early in life, but it can also originate from cultural values or traditions. Observing my parents from a young age imbued me with a passion and drive for service – to others as well as for greater causes.

Again, that’s just one example, but notice how you can bring the focus more on you, while making your main idea clearer and more concrete.

Also, be sure to check out the following videos (hold **CTRL and click** on the thumbnails to play in a new browser window!)



Introduction:

Your introduction has three main tasks:

- **Grab your reader’s attention with a thought provoking opening sentence.**

- **Move from the general to the specific.**
- **Conclude with a focused, argumentative thesis OR key ideas in a more informational paper.**

Good intros ease the reader into the paper gradually. After the attention grabber, they will likely lay down some important general background info. Get more specific, and transition towards the key points of the paper. Finally, the very last sentence will be the thesis statement.

Overall, your intro is off to a good start moving from general ideas about this technology to more precise points. Just make sure you strengthen your thesis at the end of the paragraph. 😊

[Check out this video for more on intros!](#) Here is another link to the [EWC's advice on writing Intros](#), which also includes help on forming a thesis. Also, be sure to check out the following videos (hold **CTRL** and **click** on the thumbnails to play in a new browser window!)



Development & Research

Goals:

- Develop coherent paragraphs, points, and/or sections so that each is internally unified and functions as a part of your entire document or presentation.
- Tailor your communications to the audience.
- Provide sufficient support for your ideas
- Integrate material from research (if required) smoothly into your own content.

Overall, the content of your paper is off to a good start. My main tip is to continue to keep your own goals and your own passion at the heart of each section. Again, it's okay to explain how your parents inspired this belief, but maybe you can find more places to bring out the way you have emulated them or embodied the idea of service in action?

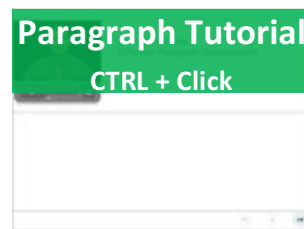
Body Paragraphs:

Body Paragraphs are most effective when they have all of the following:

- **A transition**
- **A topic sentence that relates to your thesis**
- **Relevant supporting details**
- **A strong concluding thought that relates to your thesis**

Sometimes it helps to think of each body paragraph as its own miniature essay that supports the larger one.

See the [EWCs advice on Paragraph Structure](#). Also, be sure to check out the following videos (hold **CTRL and click** on the thumbnails to play in a new browser window!)



Conclusion:

In a conclusion paragraph you'll want to:

- **Restate your thesis.**
- **Summarize your ideas.**
- **Show us why your ideas matter.**

You may want to use a transition to start such as "To Conclude," or "In Summary" then restate your thesis statement in a way that tells us something new. You'll want to review what you've told us, but also provide some insight.

The conclusion can be very satisfying to write because, even more so than the introduction, that's where you as a writer are most free to speculate on your topic and offer your own opinion, ideas, or intellectual observations.

Find something that you think is interesting about the information you've presented and show us how it is relevant. Leave the reader with some really interesting possibilities to digest so they'll be thinking about your paper later that night.

In your conclusion, you state:

While my Army service is nearing an end, my faith continues to grow as does my involvement with charity groups. My underlying theme of service looks to continue to mold my future in that only careers that excite me have a higher purpose than just making money. We each have a theme and a purpose in this life. The question is, what is yours?

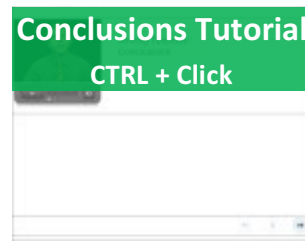
While you do review your passion for service here, you're not as concrete and clear about the direction that service might take you going forward. Instead, you shift focus and project that goal outward to the reader.

Since this is a personal essay, I would stay on the topic of **you**, **your** belief, and **your** goals. Example.

While my Army service is nearing an end, my faith continues to grow as does my involvement with charity groups. My underlying theme of service looks to continue to mold my future in that only careers that excite me have a higher purpose than just making money. Going forward, I hope to best serve _____ as a _____, _____, or _____.
Wherever my future takes me, I know that my purpose will _____ and I will ultimately be fulfilled by _____.

Again, that's just one example, and there are many ways you might review and reflect upon this theme while keeping it personal.

I've included a link to the [EWCs advice on writing conclusions](#) below which may give you some more ideas. Also, be sure to check out the following videos (hold **CTRL** and **click** on the thumbnails to play in a new browser window!)



Formatting & Citations

Goals:

- Format paper according to the rules of required style.
- Cite sources according to the rules of your required style.

Again, your paper is a personal essay, so no citations are necessary. However, for future assignment, you may find the following overview helpful. 😊

APA

APA papers need to consistently cite their sources via in-text citations and in the references list. You will most commonly use APA style for research papers in PSYC classes and other sciences, however as it is so common, many professors will ask for APA style papers across a wide variety of curriculum. 😊

In-Text Citations

The in-text citation comes at the end of a sentence with the author's name, year of publication, and page number inside the parentheses.

Model 1:

(Author's Last Name, Year of Publication, p. #)

When punctuating a sentence with an in-text citation, remember that your sentence will still only have one period. It is held for after the citation and placed on the outside of the closing parenthesis.

Velociraptor was a fierce predator, however not as fierce as its North American cousin Deinonychus (Grant, 2011, p. 50).

In APA format, the date of publication can appear after the author's last name in parentheses if the author's name appears within the sentence. The page number still has to be included at the end of the sentence within parentheses.

Model 2:

Author's Last Name (Year of Publication) blah blah blah (p. #).

When using a signal phrase like this, it is usually best to simply introduce the info using the author's last name (rather than a title, publication, or organization.) Since the author's name is something you must cite anyway, working it into your sentence eliminates wordiness.

Example:

According to Grant (2011), "the viciousness of the Velociraptor is overstated in comparison to its North American counterpart Deinonychus" (p. 50).

The References List

The list of full citations at the end of an APA style paper is simply titled "References" (rather than "Works Cited," or "Bibliography.")

Books in the References List:

Model (from [APA References List: Books](#)):

Author, A. A. (Year of publication). *Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle.* Location: Publisher.

Electronic Sources in the References List:

Model (from [APA References List: Electronic Sources](#)):

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Online Periodical, volume number*(issue number if available). Retrieved month day, year, (if necessary) from <http://www.someaddress.com/full/url/>

Please, use the following websites for more information:

APA Formatting and Style Guide

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

APA: General Format

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/apa/parts/general.html>

APA In-text Citations: The Basics

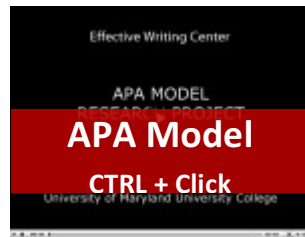
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>

APA Reference List: Books

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/>

APA Reference List: Electronic Sources

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/>



APA Titles & Headers

The formatting, structure, and content of your APA paper will in part depend on the kind of class you are taking and your instructor's preferences. If there should be a guideline of APA formatting that your instructor's wishes contradict, favor your instructor's preference. 😊

Typically, the title page of an APA paper will typically look like this:

The Title of Your Paper

The Author's Full Name (Your Name)

Your Academic Institution (UMUC)

Like the rest of your paper, title pages are double spaced. This info should occupy the upper half of the page (A good rule of thumb is to type your title after hitting the enter key 5-7 times depending on how many lines of text the title occupies). Titles may run onto two lines of text if necessary, but should not exceed that in length.

The Author's name should use first name, middle initial, and last name, but need not include titles or degree holdings like "Dr." or "Ph.D."

The title of a paper I wrote might look like this:

Common Issues in Verb Conjugation with E.S.L. Students

Kevin M. Folliard

University of Maryland University College

The [Purdue OWL](#) has a great section on the formatting of headers and sub-headers in APA, and I couldn't put it much better than they do. 😊

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/16/>

APA employs up to five heading levels that should be used in this order:

APA Headings	
Level	Format
1	Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Headings
2	Left-aligned, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading
3	Indented, boldface, lowercase heading with a period. Begin body text after the period.
4	<i>Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase heading with a period.</i> Begin body text after the period.
5	<i>Indented, italicized, lowercase heading with a period.</i> Begin body text after the period.

Note that for titles, headers, and sub-headers special capitalization rules apply. You will never have a header or title that is ALL CAPS.

Grammar & Mechanics

Goals:

- Use sentence structure appropriate for your task, message, and audience.
- Follow conventions of Standard Written English.

Always proofread carefully. Sometimes it helps to read your paper out loud to yourself or switch papers with a friend to try and catch as many mistakes as possible. I cannot proofread your whole paper for you, but here are a few pointers to help get you started on revision...

Commas:

Commas can be used to put a pause in a sentence after an introductory clause. A pair of them may also separate a clause or idea from the sentence.

Introductory clauses explain details that are not directly related to the main idea of the sentence. When you lead in with descriptive info this way, you almost always set it apart with a comma.

Typically a good rule of thumb is that if you have a prepositional phrase as your opener, you probably need to set it apart from the main action of the sentence.

In the 1950s, rock and roll music was born!

Across town, they have a lovely restaurant.

Through careful reflection, I was able to reach a decision.

Each of those introductory clauses is set apart by a comma because it describes something related to the main point of the sentence before the main subject and verb are introduced.

When a descriptive clause leads **away** from the main action of the sentence, however, no commas are needed...

Rock and roll music was born in the 1950s!

They have a lovely restaurant across town.

I was able to reach a decision through careful reflection.

There's an interesting rule of thumb with commas when you have a proper term and a brief definition next to it. It is customary to put a set of commas to separate a definition that comes after the formal term. But when the definition precedes the formal term no commas are necessary. For example:

Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president, was shot by John Wilkes Booth, an actor.

We separate the descriptions from the proper names with commas. But what if the descriptions led up to the proper names? Then no commas are needed because the names are more important than the definitions and should be part of the sentence proper...

The sixteenth president Abraham Lincoln was shot by the actor John Wilkes Booth.

I recommend taking a few minutes to review some rules regarding commas. As you proofread and revise, pay close attention to where the commas are and are not in your paper.



Commas: Three Sentence Uses

http://polaris.umuc.edu/ewc/web/commas_sent.html

Let's check out a few examples from *your* paper . . .

EXAMPLE	Issues to Consider . . .	Potential Revision . . .
My father did not work in a service profession, however he provided consistent examples of doing for others.	Comma splice. Do not use a comma to do the job of a period or semi-colon. You also have an incomplete idea here. "Doing" what?	My father did not work in a service profession. However, he provided consistent examples of doing good works for others.

As a child I was not drawn to sports for recreation.	Use a comma after an introductory, descriptive clause.	As a child, I was not drawn to sports for recreation.
As a cadet I learned the majority of skills that one learns in the Boy Scouts such as land navigation, survival skills, and basic first aid.	Same as above.	As a cadet, I learned the majority of skills that one learns in the Boy Scouts such as land navigation, survival skills, and basic first aid.

SPECIAL INVITATION:

If you want more excellent tips on proofreading and revision, check out this EWC Google Hangouts presentation:

"10 Proofreading Tricks They Don't Teach in School!"

<https://plus.google.com/events/ce08lmhodeifk1ea1ien2aif82o>

This brief lecture covers pointers on:

- Developing good proofreading habits
- Getting the most out of the tools and resources at your disposal
- Making revision a smooth, painless operation
- And *more!*

Summary

Good luck! As you continue your work on this project, be sure to:

1. Strengthen your opening/thesis to be clearer and more focused on your own goals.
2. Throughout your paper keep the central focus on you. Keep this essay personal. Try not to redirect the focus out at the reader in your conclusion.
3. Proofread carefully for grammar, mechanics, and punctuation.

Writing Advisor:

Kevin Folliard

The Effective Writing Center

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More Resources

Here is a great breakdown of the [most common uses for commas in a sentence](#):

[Commas: Three Sentence Uses](#)

http://polaris.umuc.edu/ewc/web/commas_sent.html

Copy of Your Draft

“This I Believe”

I believe that each person has one goal or primordial drive that steers the outcome of every major decision in their life. It is usually derived from our experiences early in life, but can also originate from our ancestor’s traditions. My passion and drive is service – to others and/or for greater cause.

Looking back, my chosen profession and personal drive was inevitable. My mother taught 1st grade and kindergarten for over 20 years and teaches Sunday school to this day. My father did not work in a service profession, however he provided consistent examples of doing for others.

My father was an accountant and real-estate agent by trade. This fact and his college degree could have prevented him from being drafted into the Vietnam War, but men of character throughout history have answered their nation’s call when at war. After his time of national service, his examples turned to financial and local matters. He taught those less-fortunate within his sphere of influence how to setup budgets and provided advice from personal experience on how to climb out from under debt. He personally financed the construction of a local church building from his savings. He served as a deacon for over 15 years in the local church. Lastly, rather than live a lavish lifestyle in his later years, he saved and sacrificed so that his wife would not have to worry about financial matters after his passing.

While my life was my own, my upbringing and choices made at a young age foretold the path I would travel. As a child I was not drawn to sports for recreation. Instead I gravitated toward music and spent my high-school years performing in different uniforms for sporting events and for fundraisers. I joined the local Civil Air Patrol (CAP) in 2001 – the first organization I joined outside of a school sponsored team/group. CAP is an auxiliary of the US Air Force focused on private aviation search & rescue operations. They also manage cadet program for middle and high schoolers. As a cadet I learned the majority of skills that one learns in the Boy Scouts such as land navigation, survival skills, and basic first aid. What drew me

to the organization though was the higher purpose. I wasn't only learning life skills; I was filling a real-life need and service. Subsequently in college, I left my love of music for a higher calling – service to God as a Christian and Soldier. Within the same year, I was baptized into the Church and swore an oath to defend the US Constitution as an Army Officer.

While my Army service is nearing an end, my faith continues to grow as does my involvement with charity groups. My underlying theme of service looks to continue to mold my future in that only careers that excite me have a higher purpose than just making money. We each have a theme and a purpose in this life. The question is, what is yours?