Writing a Persuasive Essay

Sample Student Essay (topic-Columbus Day)

The goal is to show your knowledge of both sides of a historical debate, but persuade the reader that one side is more historically accurate/valid than the other, i.e. your thesis.

First, focus in on exactly what the debate is about…what are the two sides of the debate. These two topics/concepts will be EXACT words from the question and the topics of your two body paragraphs.

Second, make a list (outline) of all relevant info—names, dates, places, laws, wars, elections, treaties, etc.—for both sides of the debate. These will be the examples you will use within your body paragraphs and to show your knowledge. The longer list will likely be the side you will try to “prove” as your thesis.

Third, write……

Introduction—intro both sides of the debate and show which side of the debate you're proving through a clear thesis statement. Begin with an “Although” sentence which implies your thesis. “Although politics played a role in causing the English Civil war, it was primarily a war based upon religious differences.” Then use the next sentence to example side A of the debate, and a third sentence to example side B. (These two sentences will simply give the reader an idea as to the sort of info you'll be using within the body and make a good first impression since you know some facts.) Lastly, use a clincher to make a clear, positive statement of your thesis. That's a four sentence intro…short and sweet.

Here are the four key words that you will use for each of your sentences in your introductory paragraph:

1. “Although…….(include both topics)
2. “Certainly…….(include example of side A of debate)
3. “However,…….(include example of side B of debate)
4. “Thus,………….(make clear clincher that states your thesis that side B is more valid)

Body—two paragraphs, showing your knowledge of each topic. Start with the side you're not proving (side A) as implied in the intro. Then transition to side B.

Topic sentence of first body paragraph MUST contain the EXACT word you selected from the question to use as one of your two topics. This will show the reader that you know EXACTLY what the question has asked. Then expand the paragraph with examples from your lists using adverbs to connect each sentence for better style…further, furthermore, moreover, in addition, also, another, on top of…, lastly, finally.
Transition—at the end of first body paragraph or at beginning of second, you MUST write a clear transition sentence incorporating BOTH topics. Your goal is to say what you've just covered and what topic is next. Use conjunction or preposition to begin your transition…. Despite, Even though, In spite of, While, Thus/however.

There is no need for a topic sentence to begin the 2nd body paragraph because it has been implied in your transition sentence.

2nd body paragraph will use examples from your list to show your knowledge. Again use adverbs to connect one sentence to the next….further, also, etc.

Conclusion-- just like intro- short and sweet. State the two topics that have been discussed and make a clear, positive clincher of your thesis/conclusion. No need to worry here since the damage has already been done.