Elements of an Essay

Introduction

- **Hook**: 1
  - Grab your reader’s attention with an anecdote, quote, or interesting fact related to your topic

- **Context**: 2
  - Provide any background info necessary for your readers to understand the topic and/or appreciate its significance

- **Thesis**: 3
  - State your arguable claim and include the specific ideas your paper will address as justification for that claim

Body Paragraphs

- **Topic sentence**: 4
  - Indicate the specific point to be addressed in a single paragraph. Include key words that connect directly to the thesis

- **Supporting Point**: 5
  - Specific points/examples that prove the topic sentence’s claim true. You can have as many supporting points in your paragraph as needed, as long as each one is backed up by evidence.

- **Evidence**: 6
  - Provide justification for the topic sentence’s claim. Evidence can come in the form of data, quotations, charts, facts, or other cited information

- **Concluding Sentence**: 7
  - Reinforce the main point of the topic sentence and connect the paragraph’s ideas directly to the thesis

Conclusion

- **Thesis**: 8
  - Use new words to restate original thesis

- **Summary**: 9
  - BRIEFLY remind readers of major points of the argument

- **Implications**: 10
  - Answer the “so what?” question by suggesting any consequences, recommendations, predictions, and/or calls to action that stem from the paper’s overall argument

- **Full Circle**: 11
  - Provide a note of finality by touching back on the hook that started everything

Include as many body paragraphs as needed to fully develop your ideas. Also, don’t be afraid to split a main idea into multiple paragraphs if one will be too large!
In the following essay, each element (e.g. thesis statement, topic sentence, supporting point, etc.) has been indicated with a superscript number at the beginning of the sentence that matches the number in the diagram on the other side of this handout. See how all the elements work together to create a fluid essay?

**Escape Reading**

1. Wake up, read the paper, go to work, eat dinner, go to sleep, and repeat over and over again each day. 2. Sound familiar? Given our tendencies to fall into repetitive patterns, it is safe to assume that everyone needs to escape from such dull routines at some point or another. 3. Escape can sometimes be dangerous—if a person turns to alcohol or drugs, for instance. 4. But escaping into a sport or hobby can be a healthy way to turn off the daily pressure. 5. In fact, one of the best escape hatches available is reading books, for they carry us to other times and places without us ever having to leave our homes.

4. Spy stories, first of all, provide a particularly thrilling escape from the monotonous. 5. These books are usually set in exotic lands readers might never actually see otherwise. 6. Some of my favorite spies, for example, pass information to each other in Tokyo markets, cafés in Venice, and airports in Bombay. 7. In addition, spy novels are filled with fascinating marvels of technology. 8. James Bond has his Lotus car equipped with smoke screen and machine gun controls, of course, but even less glamorous spies use cameras the size of match boxes and microphones that pick up conversations miles away. 9. The intricate, twisted plots of spy stories also aid the sensation of total escape. 10. Keeping up with the secret agents, the counterspies, and the double crosses can easily occupy a reader’s mind completely. 11. It is hard to worry about whether or not your car will pass inspection when you’re trying to figure out which American agent is really working for the KGB.

4. A second effective kind of escape reading is the Western. 5. A book by Zane Grey or Louis L’Amour is filled with the atmosphere of a long-ago era. 6. Readers can live for a time in a town like Dodge City; clear images of the dusty main street, the raised wooden sidewalks, and the women wearing calico sunbonnets creates for us another world entirely. 7. The Western also fosters escape by providing plenty of action. 8. Almost every page puts readers in the midst of a cattle roundup, a gunfight, or a galloping posse. 9. The non-stop action won’t allow our minds to wander back to the real world until we turn the last page. 10. Finally, a Western provides tempting escapes because the story usually describes a simpler, less confusing world than our own. 11. The characters are either good guys or bad guys, and it is easy to tell the difference. 12. In the Old West, justice always triumphs in the end—a nice distraction from real world events that are often not so neat and tidy.

4. The final and most enjoyable escape I know is reading horror stories. 5. For one thing, such stories maintain interest because the authors create such fascinating imaginary monsters. 6. A story about a slimy creature that emerges from a graveyard or a huge, hundred-pound rat that lives in a basement is a story that blinks out reality. 7. Horror stories introduce us to imaginary places as well. 8. A horror tale can be set in a series of tunnels beneath an Antarctic ice sheet or in another dimension that exists only in a spooky old house. 9. Pure shock, however, is what makes horror stories sure-fire escapes. 10. The problems we have at work could never be as bad, for example, as the horrible situations Stephen King’s characters endure. 11. As readers encounter a woman being chased by a rabid St. Bernard or a little boy being pursued by an insane and murderous father, we forget the outside world completely.

4. Indeed, reading books truly is a valuable means of escape. 5. Whether I’m winding through the streets of foreign lands, dodging bullets in an old-fashioned shoot-out, or fighting off a demon creature in the dark, I am always somewhere else when I’m reading. 10. The members of my family have learned to leave me in peace when I escape into my books. 11. They know that giving me such time means that I will be easier to live with. 10&11. After I have returned from a dangerous spy mission, a Western rampage, or a house of horror, I can deal more calmly with everyday crises at home and proceed through my old routines without concern—and so can you.