

## Sample Essay

The following is a sample essay based on the writing assignment in the Basic Skills Study Guide. On the surface, it looks like a simple, five-paragraph essay: introduction, three supporting paragraphs and a conclusion. There are, however, some characteristics included in this particular essay that make it effective and persuasive. This essay scored 6 out of 6 from both readers who scored it. Notice the characteristics pointed out in the right margin that make this an excellent essay. Use this essay as a model or template. Follow these tips when writing your own essay.

While there are good arguments both for and against mandatory national service, I believe there are at least three important benefits of requiring young men and women between the ages of 18 and 25 to perform one year of military or civilian service: restoring the idea of citizenship, providing young people with valuable work and life experience, and helping young Americans learn to live in a democratic society.

Paragraph 1 – Intro.  
Ends with strong thesis  
Thesis contains 3 points  
listed in least to most  
important order

Before and during World War II, the idea of citizenship was an important part of American life. Along with that idea came the responsibility to vote and to participate in the process of making our communities better places to live. John Kennedy revived the idea of citizenship in the 1960s when he called upon Americans to "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." In recent years, however, the idea of citizenship seems to have faded away. Requiring young people to devote a year of their lives to their country or their community would restore the concept that our society depends upon the contributions of all of its citizens.

Paragraph 2 - Support  
1<sup>st</sup> thesis point turned  
into topic sentence  
(least important)

Also, young people participating in a national service program would gain valuable work experience. They would learn the discipline necessary to come to work on time, every day. They would learn to work with others as part of a team. They would learn new skills and develop the ability to solve real world problems. And they would gain the satisfaction of accomplishing something significant for the benefit of others.

Paragraph 3 - Support  
2<sup>nd</sup> thesis point turned  
into topic sentence  
(more important)

Perhaps most important, mandatory national service would help young people better understand the true meaning of democracy. Whether they served their country in the armed forces, in an environmental conservation project, or at a community shelter for the homeless, young men and women would meet people from all different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. As a result, participation in national service could help break down geographic, gender, and racial barriers.

Paragraph 4 - Support  
3<sup>rd</sup> thesis point turned  
into topic sentence  
(most important)

Requiring every young American to devote a year to national service would not be without its problems. Starting up such a program would be expensive. For some people, national service would disrupt education or career plans.

Concession Sentence  
acknowledging  
opposing viewpoint

But the advantages of mandatory national service—reviving the idea of citizenship, providing valuable life experiences, and helping young people learn to work positively in a democratic society—would outweigh any disadvantages. For the young people of America, for the communities they would serve, and for our country as a whole, national service would be a valuable investment in our future.

Paragraph 5-Conclusion  
Restatement of thesis  
Strong closing sentence  
with three points  
growing in scope  
from smallest to  
largest