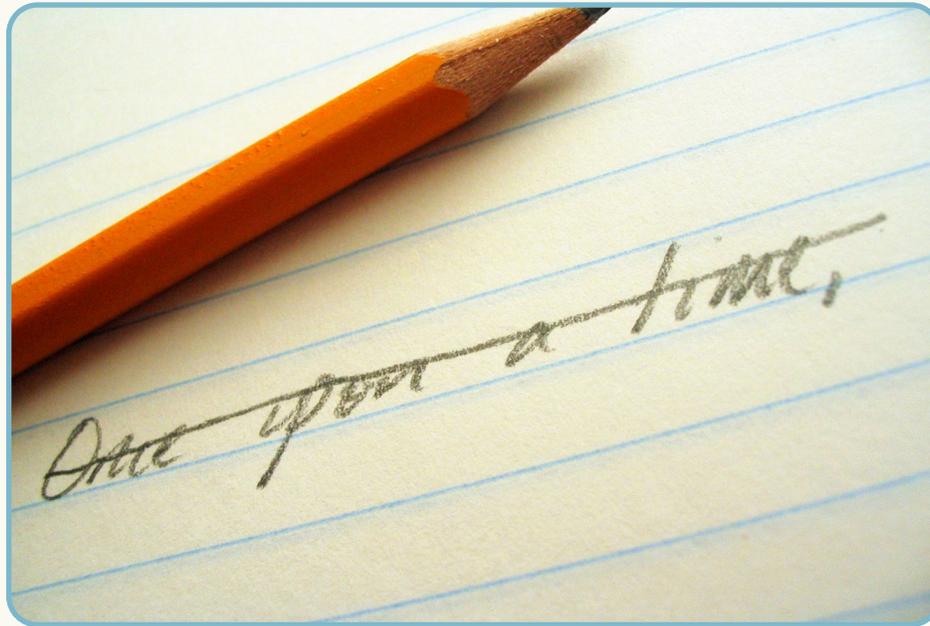




See an example of how a student can convert paragraphs into an essay, bit-by-bit and step-by-step.

## From Paragraph to Essay

**F**or some students, writing an essay is a struggle. The mere mention of essay writing so overwhelms these students that they won't even start. For teachers, essay writing usually means hours of work at night and on the weekends. And if the writing isn't particularly engaging, that work can be a struggle as well.



Teachers who break long tasks into smaller bites usually find that their students have success finishing large projects. Teachers also find it easier to check.

In this case, writing an essay, the students write one paragraph at a time, and the teacher responds to their work in the same way. This approach is easy on both parties, is effective with middle-schoolers who are just learning the structure of a five-paragraph theme, and with seniors who are still dragging their heels about writing anything.

Each student has a writing folder that remains in the classroom. On Monday, students write the introduction to their essays and put them in their folders. That first night, the teacher reads the introductions and replies with whatever corrections or suggestions for revision are necessary.

On Tuesday, the introductions are handed back to students in their folders. That day, students write the first support paragraph and returns it to the folder. The teacher collects the folders, reads the first support paragraphs that night, and again makes corrections or suggestions. The folders are returned the next day.

On Wednesday, students write the second support paragraph. Once again, the teacher collects their work and makes corrections. The teacher repeats the process on Thursday with the last paragraph of support. On Friday, students write their conclusions.

On the following Monday, when the teacher returns the conclusions and the folders, students will have an entire essay. Now they can revise their work, making the corrections and revisions the teacher suggested



## From Paragraph to Essay (continued)

along the way. A rubric is provided to the students so they can follow their progress on organization, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. The rubric and the teacher's comments help students see what's needed to produce an acceptable final essay.

Throughout the week, the teacher can present mini-lessons on appropriate writing skills. For example, there could be a lesson on transitions that asks students to use words like *first*, *second*, *third* (for beginners) or *later*, *while*, *since*, *occasionally*, *consequently*, and so forth (for more experienced writers) between paragraphs.

There could also be a lesson on identifying weak words and expressions and replacing limp language with strong action verbs, vivid adjectives, and specific nouns. Or there could be a review of semicolons, asking students to find a place where they could use a semicolon instead of a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

But the teacher can't—and shouldn't—try to do it all at once. "All" will overwhelm the students—and the teacher, too. Using this "Piecemeal Method" encourages students to feel good about their ability to produce a lengthy piece of writing. It is a win-win approach that ends with better results for the students and less teacher time spent on reviewing the papers.