

The BLT Essay



The Ultimate 5-Paragraph Essay Template

ELEMENTS

The BLT may stand for the classic bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich, but it also shows us the elements of a strong essay:

Bold thesis

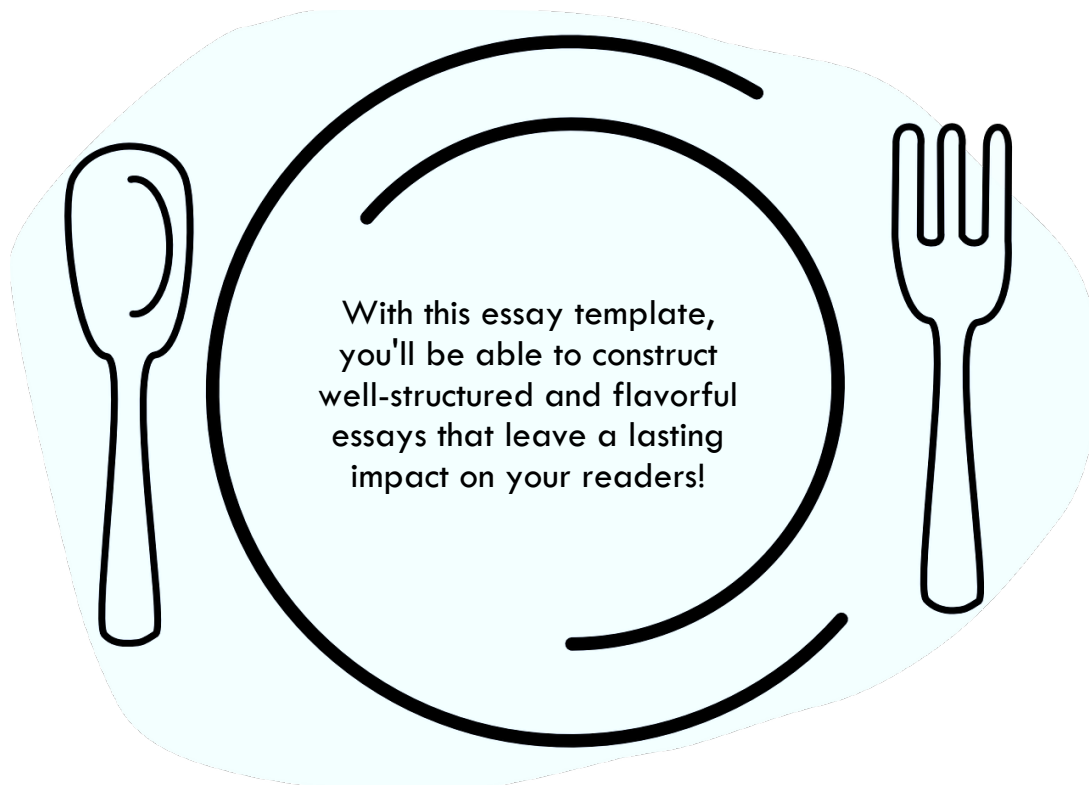
Forming a clear and assertive statement that summarizes your main argument.

Logical organization

Structuring your essay in a clear and coherent manner, with each paragraph flowing logically from one to the next.

Thorough analysis

Providing detailed explanations, examples, and evidence to support your arguments, going beyond surface-level observations.



PROMPT

For this template, you can use the following **prompt** to design your BLT essay.

For centuries, we have gazed upon the night sky, wondering if are truly alone in the universe or if there are others out there like us...

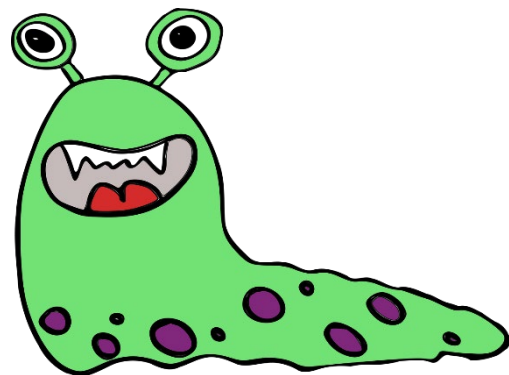
Some argue that the vastness of space suggests intelligent extraterrestrials must exist, while others say Earth is likely the only planet with the rare components necessary for a place to be habitable.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Write an essay arguing either for or against the existence of intelligent extraterrestrial life.

Use scientific theories and evidence to support your ideas.

No matter what you believe, I will always believe in myself!



BRAINSTORM



What is your essay **prompt**? Jot it down.

Hmm... what are your thoughts? In a sentence or two, put down **your answer** to the prompt.

Interesting! Why do you think so? Share **3 Reasons** why.

Reason 1

Reason 2

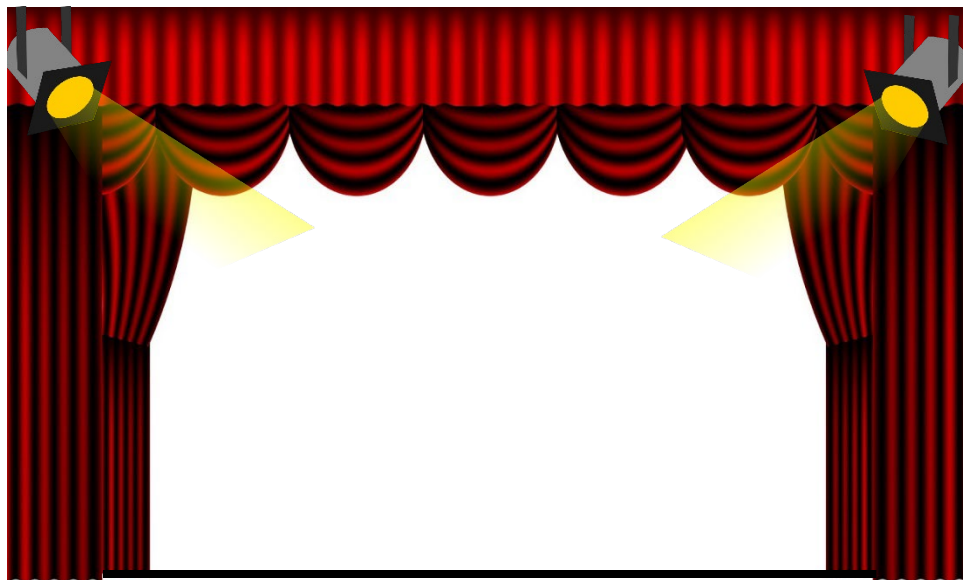
Reason 3

TOPIC & PURPOSE

Set the stage for what the reader can expect to learn from your essay.

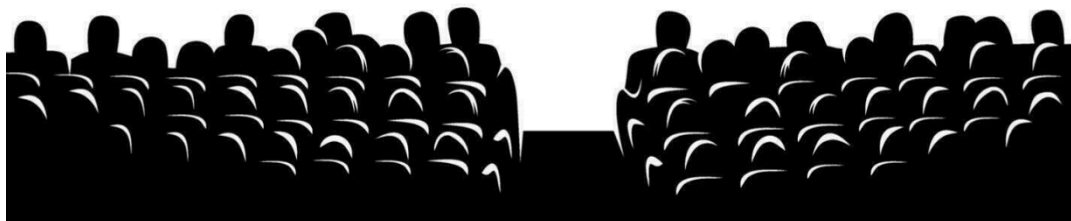
The **topic** refers to the **main idea** of the essay, or what the essay is about at its most basic level.

State the topic of your essay on the stage below.



The **purpose** refers to the reason **why** the essay is being written.

State the purpose of your essay by answering the question in the audience box below.



In what way will your essay impact your audience?

EVIDENCE



Use the **Evidence T-chart** to sort evidence that supports your reasons. To find evidence, search for keywords in books, journal articles, and websites (preferably ending with .org, .gov, or .edu).

Use a separate Evidence T-chart for each source you find.

Follow these steps to use the Evidence T-chart:

1. Note the **Reason** you want to focus on.
2. Cite the **source** of where you are finding your evidence.
3. Copy/paste the evidence you find under the **Their Words** column. Add quotation marks.
4. In the **My Words** column, next to the evidence you just found, paraphrase the evidence into your own words.

Here's an example:

EVIDENCE T-CHART	
Reason Extraterrestrial life could exist because there may be planets out there that can sustain life.	
Citation NASA. (2023, November 17). Do aliens exist? we asked a NASA scientist: Episode 5. NASA. https://www.nasa.gov/solar-system/planets/mars/do-aliens-exist-we-asked-a-nasa-scientist-episode-5/	
Their Words	My Words
"Our definition of habitable environments continues to expand. Off the Earth we've only begun to look."	Our understanding of what makes an environment livable continues to grow. Humans have only recently begun to search for habitable planets.
"The more exoplanets we find around other stars, the more we learn about how many different environments could exist for life."	Discovering planets outside of our solar system can help us determine the number of planets that could be able to sustain life.
"To quote Carl Sagan: 'The universe is a pretty big place. If it's just us, it seems like an awful waste of space.' So, NASA will keep looking."	In the words of Carl Sagan: "The universe is a pretty big place. If it's just us, it seems like an awful waste of space." This quote gives NASA the drive to continue searching.

EVIDENCE T-CHART

Reason

Citation

Their Words

My Words

EVIDENCE T-CHART

Reason

Citation

Their Words

My Words

EVIDENCE T-CHART

Reason

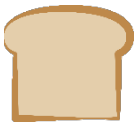
Citation

Their Words

My Words

OUTLINE

Time for the ingredients! Let's get into the meat of what makes a good outline. Think of each part of the BLT sandwich as a separate paragraph.



Top Bread – Introduction

Just as a BLT starts with a fresh top slice of bread, your essay begins with an introduction paragraph. It presents the **topic** and your **thesis**, enticing the reader to read on.



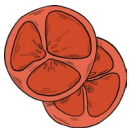
Bacon – Reason 1

Like bacon adds substance to a BLT, this paragraph provides **strong evidence to support Reason 1 and thus your thesis**, helping your reader see eye-to-eye with your ideas.



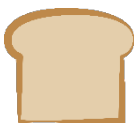
Lettuce – Reason 2

Similar to how lettuce balances a sandwich, this paragraph offers a **fresh perspective**, such as a **counter-argument**, with **evidence to support Reason 2**, complementing the previous paragraph.



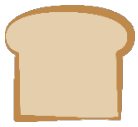
Tomato – Reason 3

Just as a juicy tomato enhances a BLT, this paragraph brings vitality to your essay, **validating your thesis** with another layer of **evidence to support Reason 3**.



Bottom Bread – Conclusion

Like the bottom bread wraps up a sandwich, your conclusion **summarizes your Reasons and reinforces your thesis**, validating your ideas and **purpose** for writing the essay.



INTRODUCTION

1. **Hook your reader.** Think of a brief sentence that will grip your reader's interest to your **topic**.
2. **Paraphrase your prompt.** Rewrite the **prompt** in your own words.
3. **Mention the opposing side.** In regards to the prompt, what is the opposite opinion of yours?
4. **State your thesis.** Say what you believe and briefly summarize your reasons to support it.

Stuck? Here's a template to help generate some ideas:

In terms of [topic], it's clear that [belief] because [Reason 1], [Reason 2], and [Reason 3].



REASON 1

1. **Begin with a topic sentence.** Create a sentence that introduces **Reason 1**, setting the stage for what the paragraph will mainly be talking about.
2. **Support Reason 1 with evidence and analysis.** From the previous **Evidence T-chart**, choose 2-3 of the strongest pieces of evidence that support Reason 1.
 - a. Use either “Their Words” as a quote, or “My Words” as paraphrasing.
 - b. Make sure to mention the author/source.
 - c. Answer the question, “Why does this evidence matter?”, to explain how the evidence supports Reason 1.

Evidence	Why does this evidence matter?

3. **Transition to the next paragraph.** Conclude with a sentence that wraps up Reason 1 and hints at Reason 2.



REASON 2

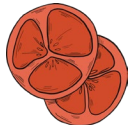
1. **Begin with a topic sentence.** Create a sentence that introduces Reason 2, setting the stage for what the paragraph will mainly be talking about.
2. **Defeat a counter-argument.** Think of an **argument the opposing side may make to discredit Reason 2**. From your **Evidence T-chart**, provide evidence that proves your ideas are stronger.

Counter-Argument	Evidence	How does this evidence win against the counter-argument?

3. **Support Reason 2 with evidence and analysis.** From the previous **Evidence T-chart**, choose 1-2 more pieces of the strongest evidence that support Reason 2. *Refer to previous page for more directions.*

Evidence	Why does this evidence matter?

4. **Transition to the next paragraph.** Conclude with a sentence that wraps up Reason 2 and hints at Reason 3.

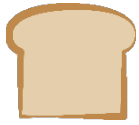


REASON 3

1. **Begin with a topic sentence.** Create a sentence that introduces **Reason 3**, setting the stage for what the paragraph will mainly be talking about.
2. **Support Reason 1 with evidence and analysis.** From the previous **Evidence T-chart**, choose 2-3 of the strongest pieces of evidence that support Reason 3.
 - a. Use either “Their Words” as a quote, or “My Words” as paraphrasing.
 - b. Make sure to mention the author/source.
 - c. Answer the question, “Why does this evidence matter?”, to explain how the evidence supports Reason 3.

Evidence	Why does this evidence matter?

3. **Transition to the conclusion.** Conclude with a sentence that wraps up Reason 3.



CONCLUSION

1. **Restate your thesis.** Begin by restating your **thesis** in a slightly different way.

2. **Review your Reasons.** Summarize the **Reasons** for your argument and briefly mention some of the **evidence** used to support them.

	Summary	Evidence
Reason 1		
Reason 2		
Reason 3		

3. **Emphasize the topic's importance.** Explain **why the topic is important** to discuss. How could this topic affect other areas, interests, and/or viewpoints?

4. **Wrap it up with a call to action or final thought.** Encourage the reader to take action, think critically, or reflect further on the topic after reading.

LAYOUT

Below is the general layout, in sequential order, your essay should follow. Each category represents a separate paragraph.

Introduction

- Hook
- Paraphrase prompt
- Mention opposing argument
- Thesis

Reason 1

- Topic sentence
- Evidence (from Evidence T-chart) → Analysis (why does this evidence matter?)
- Evidence → Analysis
- (Optional) Evidence → Analysis
- Transition sentence

Reason 2

- Topic sentence
- Counter-argument → Evidence against counter-argument → Analysis of how evidence defeats counter-argument
- Evidence → Analysis
- (Optional) Evidence → Analysis
- Transition sentence

Reason 3

- Topic sentence
- Evidence → Analysis
- Evidence → Analysis
- (Optional) Evidence → Analysis
- Transition to conclusion

Conclusion

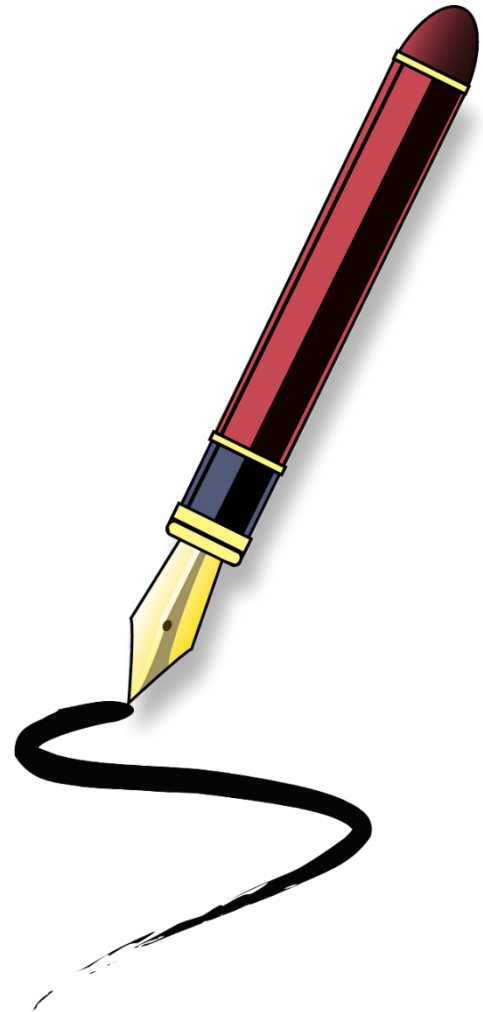
- Restate thesis
- Reason 1 summary → Brief evidence summary
- Reason 2 summary → Brief evidence summary
- Reason 3 summary → Brief evidence summary
- Emphasize topic's importance
- Call to action/Final thoughts

1ST DRAFT

It's time to officially make a sandwich! In this case, your essay. The word “writing” can feel daunting, but the information you’ve gathered and organized will help make the process flow as smooth as mayo.

Steps:

1. Format your essay to match any required guidelines (font size, spacing, and/or margins).
 - a. Add your name, date, class, and any other required information in the format requested by your teacher.
2. Give your essay a memorable title.
3. While writing, use your outline as a guide, following the structure of topic sentences and supporting evidence.
4. As you write, allow your thoughts to flow like a conversation. Add phrases/sentences that help naturally transition one thought to another. This will make your paper sound confident, original, and professional.
 - a. Stay away from “fluff” words, also known as words that you’d need a dictionary to understand what you’re saying.
 - b. Compound and complex sentences can help improve the flow of your essay
5. Don't worry too much about grammar or spelling errors at this stage. Focus on getting your ideas down on paper.



**You have great ideas and have gathered strong evidence to support them –
it's all about the content, and you're the expert.**

YOU GOT THIS!

2ND DRAFT

You did it! The first draft is done. The arguably hardest part is over. Now it's time to review, highlight, and polish your essay. **This is the time to make sure your ideas flow coherently and are supported by clear analyses that go the beyond surface level.**



Steps:

1. Reread your essay (out loud) and highlight any moments that sound confusing, awkward, or off-topic. Make your corrections as needed.
 - a. Some ideas may need further explanation or supporting evidence.
 - b. Ask yourself: *If I were on the opposing side of my thesis, would I understand the points being made and would they be convincing?*
2. Edit for grammar, punctuation, and spelling mistakes. Keep an eye out for run-on sentences and incorrect comma usage.
3. Ask a peer, teacher, or parent to read your essay and provide feedback for improvement.

Quick Tip:

If you're having trouble digging deeper into your analysis, refer to your argument and ask the question, "Why?". For the answer you come up with, ask "Why?" again, and then again, and again, until you've crafted an analysis that dives deep below surface level. For example:

The sky is cloudy today. Why?

The weather forecast says it's supposed to rain. Why?

Because there is water built up inside the clouds. Why?

Evaporation causes water to rise. Why?

The conversation can go on and on... But now we're left with something like this:

The sky is cloudy today, likely due to the fact that it's supposed to rain. Rain occurs when water droplets build up inside the clouds. Water droplets rise into the clouds from a process called evaporation...

Asking "Why?" can help make a simple statement grow into something more. Changing "Why?" to "When?", "Where?", or "How?" can also help add depth to your argument. **Just remember to back up your ideas with evidence.**

FINAL DRAFT

This is it! You're in the home stretch of submitting your essay. It's time take the last sharp look at your writing. Refer to the BLT elements of a strong essay:

Bold thesis

Logical organization

Thorough analysis



Steps:

1. Incorporate any feedback or suggestions you received and make any final edits.
2. Proofread your essay one last time to ensure it is error-free.
3. Make sure your essay is formatted correctly.
4. Submit your final essay by the deadline.

CONGRATULATIONS!

YOU DID IT!!