

CER Paragraphs

How to Elevate Your Writing for ALL Subjects

BUT OF COURSE



Have you ever asked a teacher how long an answer or a paragraph should be?

I'm sure you have!

And when you've
asked, you
always hear...
...as long as it needs
to be!



But get this...It's true.

- Length doesn't matter; it is the quality of what you write that matters!!!



The best way to
make sure you
have
everything you
need in your
responses is...

C. E. R. !

C.E.R. is...

Claim



Give an answer to the question based on your observations.

Evidence



Find information from a text or other sources that supports the claim.

Sentence starters:

One example from the text.....
In the text.....
According to the text.....

Reasoning



Explain how your evidence supports your claim.

Sentence Starters:

Based on this evidence, we must conclude (restate your claim) because (your analysis)

Claim

CLAIM

- What is a CLAIM?
 - The answer to the question you are responding to
 - The argument, stance, or the main idea of the paragraph
- The claim must be
 - arguable and defensible (no yes/no answers)

Evidence

What is EVIDENCE?

Information that supports the claim

It can be:

Textual evidence (quotes from texts)

Statistics, facts, scientific observations

Personal observations

See the picture for sentence starters!



[GOT EVIDENCE?]
Prove it!

Because...

Based on what I read...

For instance...

The author stated...

FOR EXAMPLE...

According to the text...

From the reading, I know that...

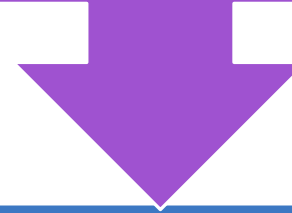
Two different sources told me that...

Be a Researcher!

venspired.com

Evidence

In-text citations are when you identify where you got the evidence you are using.



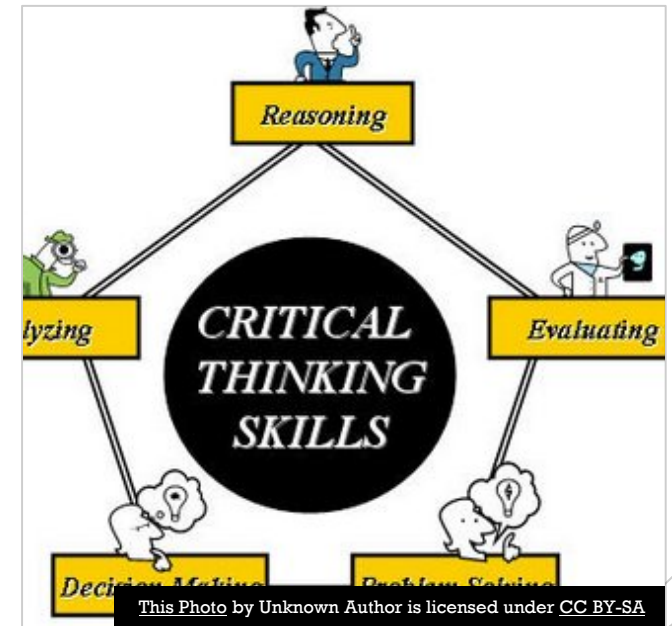
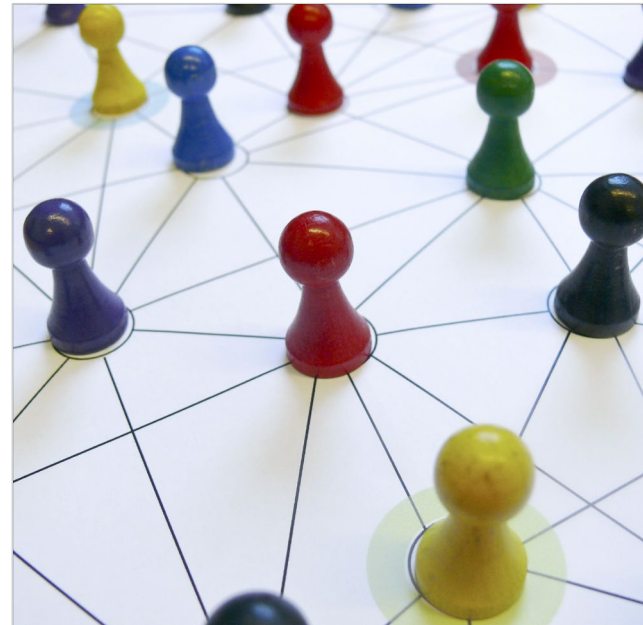
These citations can be in different forms:

Stating the source in the sentences: According to Robertson in his short story "The Ties That Bind," ...

Using parenthetical notations at the end of the sentences: (Robertson 41)

Reasoning

- The connection between the evidence and the claim
- Explains how the evidence supports the claim.



How They Work

- Writing a complete paragraph entails all three of those elements:
 - State your position, provide proof, and explain how that proof works.
 - A more in-depth paragraph can have many pieces of evidence with more reasoning for how it all connects.
- The best thing about this format:
 - An essay is a bunch of CER paragraphs put together to answer a big question.

The Big Question

Note! I will not always use this question stem, but I use it a great deal.

- The best way to ask questions that elicit better responses is to ask the “To what extent...?” questions.
- This question stem eliminates a polar answer (a yes/no answer) that doesn’t allow for discussion.
- By asking “To what extent...,” you aren’t discussing *if* you believe something or not, you are discussing *how much* you believe it.

FOR INSTANCE:

- Is blue your favorite color?
- This is just a “yes” or “no” answer.
- Even adding “Explain” to the question doesn’t really do anything for a discussion of the color: Explain why your favorite color is or is not blue.

HOWEVER:

- To what extent is blue your favorite color?
- This prompts more discussion: maybe you like the color blue, but it's not a favorite.
- Or maybe you don't like the color blue but you know there is nothing wrong with it.
- Or maybe you don't like the color blue at all because it makes you depressed or reminds you of something you don't like.
- Any way you answer, you will almost automatically 1) do the CER paragraph and 2) think more about why you think one way or another.

Example Question:

- **To what extent are reading skills important for a successful life?**

Good Example

Strong reading skills are essential for students. According to dosomething.org, of the juveniles who face trial in the juvenile court system, nearly 85% are illiterate. This shows a strong relationship between illiteracy and crime. Emphasizing reading skills in school can not only change a student's academics, but his or her life as well.

Bad Example

It is important to know how to read and write. It is important because some people think it will help you stay out of jail. This is why it's important to know how to read and write.

Example Question

- To what extent is proper sleep important for teenagers?

Good Example

A proper sleep schedule is vital to a teenager's development. Sleepfoundation.org states that teens need between eight and ten hours of sleep a night, but only about 15% of teens report getting eight or more hours of sleep. This means that many are not getting the sleep they need, which, according to the same source, leads to a limited ability to "learn, listen, concentrate, and solve problems." Getting the proper amount of sleep will result in better school performance, which will lead to less stress, and a better chance of better sleep.

Bad Example

It is important that teens are able to sleep. If they don't, they are stressed out, don't eat well, get more acne, and are more likely to fall asleep in class. Sleepfoundation.org shows this on their website. That is why teenagers need to get more sleep.

General Rubric

4 - Excellent

- Completely responds to prompt
- Deep understanding of key ideas
- Excellent evidence and connections

3 - Good

- May stray from the prompt slightly
- General understanding of key ideas
- Good evidence and connections

2 - Almost

- Somewhat focused on the prompt
- Some gaps in understanding key ideas
- Decent evidence, attempt at connection.

1 - Not Quite

- No attempt to respond to prompt or substitutes a different task
- Little to no understanding of key ideas
- No evidence, no connection