

Problem/Solution Paper
Johnson County Community College Writing Center

Writing the Problem/Solution Essay

- I. What is the problem or issue to be solved? In the **introduction** the problem should be stated, and any necessary background information (key terms) needed to understand the problem should be addressed. The **thesis** is the statement of the problem.
- II. What are the causes of the problem? Why did it happen? For whom is this a problem? What are the effects of the problem? Why is it a problem? The better you, the writer, understand the problem and all its implications, the better solution you will find. (**Body** paragraphs)
- III. What are the options to solving the problem? What are the various ways to solve the problem? What resources are available? (**Body** paragraphs)
- IV. Each solution must be examined for its feasibility. What are the advantages and disadvantages? Use logical thinking in your discussion. Apply learned or researched theories and/or principles. Consider all sides and look for repercussions. What could go wrong; what might not work; what might not be supported? (**Body** paragraphs)
- V. After the analysis which solution is the most feasible and why did you choose it? In this **conclusion** the value of the chosen solution is rationalized.

The Process for Writing the Problem/Solution Essay

- I. Prewriting steps, including critical reading, critical thinking, journaling, listing, outlining (think through the organization and development (supporting facts) of the paper.
- II. Drafting, writing a rough draft which follows pattern suggested above. If strapped for time, consider the application of the 5-paragraph theme. Actually state the problem and the solution options in the thesis. Then the body paragraphs discuss each solution with the conclusion stating the best solution and why.
- III. Revising, making sure argument/reasoning is logical and well supported. Using transitional devices to connect ideas to the thesis and to move the reader from one idea to the next.
- IV. Editing, correcting awkward and illogical sentences, choosing the correct words to appropriately convey meaning, and eliminating major sentence level errors, such as run-on sentences, fragments, and comma splices.
- V. Proofreading, eliminating mechanical errors, such as punctuation, spelling, typographical, and usage problems.

Writing Center Resources

To read some samples of problem/solution essays....read "Who Will Take Care of the Children?" by Hartzel Lebed pp.284-291 in *Patterns in Action* by Robert A. Schwegler or
"When Is It Rape?" by Nancy Gibbs pp. 144-153 in *Thinking Critically*, 5th edition, by John Chaffee

Sample Essays
Tiffany's Disco

There are many different approaches to the problem of Boy Meets Girl, but, at Tiffany's, the most popular discotheque in the area, solution of this problem becomes an art. There are three basic requirements that must be mastered before one competes with or becomes an accepted member of the Tiffany's "ruling class." A person must learn the art of body language in order to communicate with the local inhabitants. This is the only language they seem to understand. It enables a person to look slightly interested without appearing too eager. Second, a person must learn to keep up with the different styles of dance that are acceptable. The person must also be daring enough to be a pace-setter when it comes to learning the varied dances that are introduced monthly. Finally, the person must dress like everybody else, yet, above all, be individual! One has to dress in a way that is so unique and "far out" that the individual costume blends with all the other costumes at Tiffany's--a cross between a Halloween costume and those in an old Bogart flick.

To be considered unique, a person must dress fashionably but not too formally. It is important to look relaxed, but at the same time the dresser must wear something that is eye-catching and flashy. Generally, this means wearing feathers, sequin-studded jackets and pants, or blouses and shirts that reveal, in the light, more than their paisley print material. Hats are worn by both men and women who frequent Tiffany's because hats create moods and add touches of mystery, especially when they are cocked over one eye. The use of scarves also reveals creativity and artistry of the wearer. The experienced male will wear a very tailored, fairly conservative suit with a shirt that is slightly open at the neck. This gives the image of affluence, but at the same time gives the impression of a man who is willing and able to have fun, a combination which will attract any red-blooded, all-American female.

Another way to attract the opposite sex and to be accepted by the "regulars" at Tiffany's (those who are required to make an appearance at least four times a week) is to keep up to date with all of the new dances. This may prove to be a full time job, for whenever music is playing, the dance floor is transformed into a stage where all the participants show off their agility, balance, and, above all, their rhythm. Everyone seems to be in competition. If the male's fellow competitor proves to be no match for him, he will then go into competition with himself, trying to prove his hard-earned grace and rhythm. The female behaves slightly differently. If a girl wants to dance, but not necessarily with the person she is with, she may face toward the main body of men (usually at the bar) and dance as if she "were advertising a new line of underwear. There is no set pattern or certain way to dance at Tiffany's. A dancer must simply keep in style and have enough rhythm to dance and chew gum at the same time. The brand of gum does not make any difference.

Those people who dance well seem to have a knowledge of body language, and their moves on and off the dance floor send messages to all who care to interpret them.

Eye contact is vital when one is using body language. When a member of the opposite sex shows interest in the person seeking attention, the eyes play an important part. One's eyes must not appear too eager, but at the same time the attention-seeker must not be too aloof. A returned glance for just the right length of time can prove to be very effective. Also, a person must sit in a relaxed manner and avoid drinking as if one's leg is hollow. If a person acts and carries himself or herself as if he or she were handsome and beautiful, then those who probably would not give a second look will be looking with eager attention.

After one has mastered the art of body language and the proper way to dress and dance, then the person is ready to enter the world of Tiffany's where the rest is up to Fate. Once the novice has learned the fundamentals, a few tricks will begin to develop. One must remember to be eye-catching in dress by creating moods with different accessory items, to be acceptable by inventing new and creative dance steps, and to use the body, especially the eyes, to communicate. These basic requirements will insure a lifetime membership at Tiffany's, the discotheque where the problem of Boy Meets Girl becomes a challenge and the solution becomes an art.

Cindy M. Torres

The Problems of Working and Attending College

As the old saying goes, "A person must go to school to get a better job, and a person must work to go to school." Sometimes this is not as easy as it sounds. When a person tries to carry a standard college load of fifteen hours and at the same time to have a part-time job working from twenty to thirty hours a week, problems for that person will arise. Three of the most common of these problems are not having enough time to study, not having enough time to get the proper rest and diet, and not having enough time to relax and socialize.

First of all, there never seems to be enough time to study and do homework. Carrying a college load of fifteen hours amounts to four or five classes. This means that a student has to study a great deal in order to pass periodic quizzes and final exams. Also, there is much homework to keep up with. Usually, the student's work precludes studying for exams, so the night before a quiz finds one cramming and praying. The results are never half as good as they could have been had the student had more time. Too, homework is usually of poor content and quality because it is put off until ten minutes before class time, if it is turned in at all. The final grade is a C or D, which could have been an A or B if a little more time had been devoted to the subject.

Second, there is never enough time for the working college student to get the proper rest and diet. Running around from class to class in the morning and then going to work in the evening can be very exhausting, yet being tired does not guarantee a sound sleep. The concentration in the classroom is poor; there is no desire to take notes nor to contribute to class discussions. Also, the average daily diet of the "on the go" person is

not a very healthy one. The diet usually consists of a cup of coffee or a glass of milk for breakfast; a soda, sandwich, and a bag of chips for lunch; and either nothing or a repeat of the lunch menu for supper. This poor diet contributes to the fatigue and rundown condition of the student.

The last problem of the student-worker is not having enough time to relax and socialize. There is never time for favorite relaxations such as watching television, reading a good book, and taking a long bath. There is seldom time for hobbies such as sewing or painting; nor is there time for sports such as tennis or golf. There is seldom time for dating and parties. Always attending college and working does not leave one with very much time for an active family and social life. Thus, a person who works and goes to school at the same time finds problems with grades, physical and mental condition, and social activities.

Nancy Billimek

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