# Writing a Problem-Solution Paper

It can be challenging to know how to write a problem-solution paper. English instructors often develop their assignments with specific instructions on how they would like the problem-solution essay structured. Please ensure that the instructor's links and sources are utilized for guidance throughout the writing process. This handout serves as a general overview of what a problem-solution paper includes and should be used as a supplement to the primary resources shared by the instructor.

**The Purpose of a Problem-Solution Paper**

Problem-Solution essays address realistic issues or existing problems, and they supply viable solutions to these problems. This type of academic writing requires the use of critical thinking and research skills. This involves analyzing a problem, proposing feasible solutions, and providing accurate and appropriate evidence to support the arguments.

**How to Create a Problem-Solution Essay**

1. **Select a topic.** When brainstorming ideas for a topic, consider issues that are presently occurring in society and are appropriate to write about, such as endangered wildlife, obesity, and mental health. However, it is important to note that selecting a topic that is too broad, such as solving world hunger, would make it difficult to propose an achievable solution in one essay. In this case, for example, it is best to narrow down the topic to address food access in a specific location to provide an opportunity for more manageable solutions to the research topic.

2. **Introduce the reader to the problem.**
   a. **Attention Getter/Hook:** When beginning a problem-solution essay, it is important to capture the reader's attention either through a quotation, brief anecdote, or a statistical fact. The goal is to intrigue the reader enough that they will want to continue reading the essay.
   b. **Background Information:** Provide an adequate amount of background or historical information that might help explain what could be causing the problem.
   c. **Thesis:** The thesis is a vital portion of the essay and should include clearly stated main ideas, which will explain the problem and discuss a possible solution.

3. **Define the problem.** As stated above, it is important to choose a problem that is narrow and specific. This way, the problem can be clearly explained, and the readers will have the proper context to understand why the proposed solution is relevant. Some issues to consider include when and how the problem started, who or what group of individuals have been adversely affected, who has benefited from this situation, and why the problem exists. This is where the root causes can be identified. Writers should also consider describing the chain of events that led to the current problem. It is also necessary to include research that provides data to support the thesis.

   **For example**: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on American citizens' finances because of the global shutdown, spiking layoffs, and unemployment. Although society is returning to its norm, Richmond citizens are still suffering from significant inequalities in income levels, causing increased homelessness compared to other cities.

4. **Analyze the problem.** In this section, identify the main factors contributing to the persistence of the problem, and provide supporting evidence. Another point to consider is what consequences could result if the problem is not solved. What laws or government funded programs could benefit or negatively impact this issue? Also worth considering are the effects that the problem has on society, the economy, or even the environment.

5. **Propose a solution.** Proposing a practical solution is the heart of a problem-solution essay. Writers should directly address their identified problem with a well-developed solution that is not only logical but also manageable, and which is supported by documented evidence and expert perspectives. This portion of the essay is where the solution is stated, explaining why it is helpful, who can take action, how it should be implemented, and how it solves the problem. When possible, research should be used to illustrate how the solution positively affects the problem and its causes.

6. **Evaluate the solution.** Here, writers should discuss the limitations and strengths of the proposed solution. What are some of the disadvantages or challenges that could potentially weaken the significance of solving the problem? Writers should also acknowledge the strengths of the solution. What are the long-term advantages of the solution, or how does it resolve the problem in its entirety?

7. **Address the opposition.** This part of the paper is called the rebuttal, and it discusses the opposing perspective. It illustrates that the writer has considered and researched the perspectives of the opposing side. Addressing the opposition also enhances the writer's understanding of the topic, further demonstrating the ability to rationally communicate both arguments in an unbiased and effective manner.

8. **Conclusion.** The conclusion should begin with a restatement of the thesis. Then, the main points should be summarized, and the readers should be urged to be proactive in assisting with the implementation of the proposed solution. This is often referred to as the call to action. Finally, the closing statement should focus on what the readers need to remember most about the topic.