Essay Guidelines

A persuasive, analytical essay should contain three main parts: the introductory paragraph, supplementary paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. The components of each part are outlined and explained below.

I. **The Introductory Paragraph**
   a. The purpose of this paragraph is for the student to indicate to the reader that they have a good understanding of the focus of the question. This paragraph should include the following information:
      i. Historical Context: establish the time period and historical context of the essay. Provide relevant background information. Set the scene by describing the context of your content. What is going on at this time? What is a key theme? Connect the essay topic to something you know about the era. Define the key concept: define or explain the key concept or topic of the essay. For example, if the essay is about the Industrial Revolution then the intro should define Industrial Revolution. If the prompt specifies a time period, those dates <u>MUST</u> be stated in the intro.
      ii. Thesis Statement: should be assertive, concise, and should include a brief listing of the main organizational points that will be used to structure and present the data used to defend the assertion. The emphasis is on organization <u>NOT</u> detailed explanation. Should be the last sentence of the introduction. The thesis will follow this formula: X. However, due to A, B, and C, Y.
         1. Where X represents the strongest point against your argument. This is the counterargument. It can also be an alternative viewpoint.
         2. Where A, B, & C are the three strongest arguments in favor of your position
         3. Where Y is your assertion; what the essay is attempting to prove
         For example: *Political parties were powerful because of their significant impact on the structure and organization of Congress. However, due to the introduction of direct primaries, the ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment, and the passage of civil service reform parties became less powerful overall at the turn of the century.*
   b. Should be at least 5-6 sentences.

II. **Supplementary Paragraphs**
   a. The number, order, and nature of these paragraphs will be determined by the organizational list in the thesis statement.
   b. Each should begin with a topic sentence – a broad statement that announces the factor being developed and analyzed and should incorporate the X, A, B, or C point.
   c. Should provide relevant factual details that support your thesis statement. These facts <u>MUST</u> include proper nouns – specific people, events, laws – and should incorporate the proper use of the unit's vocabulary.
   d. Each should end with a conclusion sentence(s). This should state the significance of the factor within the context of the question. You must explain how and why your argument and evidence support your thesis.
   e. DO NOT:
      i. Use first person (in a persuasive paper, this weakens your argument)
      ii. Appeal to emotion or answer the question with a question (i.e. How would you like it if this happened to you?)
      iii. Utilize overtly simplistic statements and the idea of single causation (i.e. PAC contributions are a form of bribery that corrupt all members of Congress)
      iv. Data-dump: providing any information without any relevant link to the thesis.
      v. Preach or moralize in the essay. The essay is not an editorial. All arguments should be based on fact.

III. **Concluding Paragraph**
   a. Restate the thesis but do not repeat it exactly.
   b. The emphasis on this paragraph should be on synthesis and evaluation. This can be done in several ways:
      i. Prioritize the arguments by identifying the factor/point that was most influential/important and explain why,
      ii. Compare and contrast the short-term versus the long-term consequences of the Y statement being true, or
      iii. Connect the topic of the question to other historical periods, geographical areas, contexts, or circumstances ("similar in kind but different in time").

      Regardless of your method, you must include a thorough explanation.
   c. Should be at least 5-6 sentences.