

A Sample Five-Paragraph Essay *"The Benefits of Regular Exercise"*

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The Benefits of Regular Exercise	Comments
<p>[1] In recent years, many people have become increasingly aware of the need for physical fitness.* Almost everywhere people turn, whether it is to a newsstand, television or billboard,* advise for guarding and improving health bombards them. Although much of this advice is commercially motivated by those eager to sell vitamins, natural foods and reducing gimmicks,* some of it, especially those advocating a regular exercise program, merits serious attention. Such a program, if it consists of at least 30 minutes three times a week and if a person's physician approves it,* provides numerous benefits. Regular exercise releases tension, improves appearance, and increases stamina.*</p>	<p>* The introduction begins with a broad view of physical fitness generally, but also engages the reader by connecting with general experience.</p> <p>* Notice that the writer reaches past the general "Almost everywhere people turn" to the more specific and concrete "newsstand, television, or billboard."</p> <p>* Again notice the specifics – not just "to sell products" or "to sell stuff." The specifics make the idea more convincing and create more associations for the reader.</p> <p>Notice how the introduction is a good place to present background, definitions and limitations that affect the thesis and topic generally.</p> <p>*By placing the thesis at the end of the introduction, the writer not only makes the main point clear and emphatic, but also makes sure that the essay's main point is uppermost in the reader's mind as the reader begins the body of the essay.</p>
<p>[2] The first of these benefits, the release of tension, is immediate.* Tension builds in the body because of an over accumulation of adrenaline produced by stress, anxiety, or fear.* Doctors agree that performing calisthenics or participating in an active sport such as tennis or volleyball for 30 minutes releases tension. If a person swims, jogs, or rides a bicycle for half that time, he or she should sleep better at night and have a better temperament the next day. In addition, after the release of tension, petty irritations and</p>	<p>*This sentence offers the paragraph's idea (release of tension), renews the essay idea (these benefits), and alerts the reader to the underlying logic of the arrangement of main ideas ("is immediate" suggests to the reader that the essay will follow a chronological order, the order in which the benefits become available.)</p> <p>* Notice the specifics in the next two sentences – specific activities and benefits.</p> <p>Notice how the general term," petty irritations and</p>

frustrations should be less troubling.* For example, an employee upset by the day's work and by traffic congestion may rush home, argue with the family, and eat excessively. Taking about 30 minutes to release frustration through physical exercise could help the person to avoid this behavior. Planned physical exercise, therefore, can eliminate, or at least control, tension.*

frustrations" is followed by specific examples.
*This closing sentence reinforces both the main paragraph and the essay idea.

[3] An improved appearance is the second benefit of regular exercise.* Exercise takes perhaps a month or longer to show its results in a trimmer, firmer figure. Improvement, however, will come. A person who is 10 pounds overweight, for instance, may be able during this time to burn away most excess fat and to tighten muscles, thereby reshaping the physique. Having improved muscle tone and even posture, he or she will wear clothes more attractively and comfortably. Combined with a sensible diet, an exercise program will also improve a person's skin tone. This improved appearance will provide confidence and favorably impress others.

*See how the paragraph discusses specific aspects of regular exercise as they relate to improving appearance. These include improving one's figure, weight, muscle tone and sensible diet.

[4] In addition to the self-confidence generated by an improved appearance, increased physical strength produces stamina.* A stronger, healthier body is obviously more capable of working harder and, in fact, of withstanding normal fatigue than a tense, weak one. A worker who exercises should be able to complete a 40-hour week and still have enough energy for mowing the grass, painting the garage, or cleaning window. Similarly, the student who goes to school, keeps house and perhaps works part time should accomplish tasks efficiently. Equally important, this stamina

* Note the transition, pointing back to the preceding paragraph and ahead of the new paragraph idea.
* Note the paragraph's structure: logical and coherent.

helps to ward off illnesses such as colds and influenza. Altogether, improved endurance is one of the most important benefits of a regular exercise program.

[5] Although easy solutions to the goals of losing weight and achieving an attractive, energetic body saturate the media,* actually acquiring these benefits is not easy. The rewards, however, are fully worth the effort on an established exercise program that makes a person feel relaxed, look healthy, and have adequate strength for strenuous as well as routine activities.*

*This is an example of the “circle close.” The conclusion returns to the introduction, repeating the initial example, question, problem or statement that opens the essay. This provides a satisfying sense of overall design and completeness, and strengthens unity. This is not the only approach to an effective conclusion, and sometimes it seems artificial or forced, but it is often smooth, effective and easy. Be sure to notice how it works here by rereading the introduction to see how it is repeated here.

*Note how clearly the essay idea and the main supporting points are reinforced through their restatement here. The overall pattern of the essay follows old advice for public speaking: “Tell them what you are going to tell them; Tell them; Tell them what you told them.” In a short essay, this approach sometimes seems like overkill – but there is little risk of your readers being confused.