

Organizing Proposal 2: Using the Declaration of Independence as a Model Composition II

Objectives: To understand how the Declaration is organized

To understand the logic behind the Declaration's organization.

The Declaration is an example of a syllogism.

A syllogism is a form of deductive reasoning used in formal argument. It's a tool used by classical philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, etc.) to use present ideas in a logical order.

A syllogism offers a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion.



SYLLOGISM: All dogs are mammals. Kevin is a dog. Kevin is a mammal!

1. All dogs are mammals. *Major premise: the theory/idea*

Government exists only to protect the natural rights of the people.

Protecting the rights of the people makes the government legitimate.

2. Kevin is a dog. *Minor premise: the specific situation + why it's a problem*

The King of England is a tyrant who infringes on the American people's natural rights. Look at how people are suffering!

3. Kevin is a mammal. *The conclusion + solution that makes sense*

The King is not a legitimate ruler, so the Americans have the right to abolish the King's illegitimate government and establish their own.

Feeling confused right now? Give me a minute to show you how this breaks down in the actual sections of the Declaration of Independence.

Take a minute to skim the Declaration (there is no test) to recall the contents. I have described the sections of the Declaration below. Numbers correspond to the numbered sections in the Declaration document.

The Declaration's organization:

Paragraph 1: Introduction

Paragraph 2: John Locke's theory of natural rights, revised (theory, background, ideas, model)

Paragraph 3: Current situation in the colonies (current situation + problems)

Paragraph 4 (list): Complaints about King's actions that prove claim (evidence of problems)

Paragraph 5: Separate from King (solution part 1)

Paragraph 6: Separate from British people (solution part 2)

Paragraph 7: Vision of new nation's rights and powers (visualization and call to action for Americans)

We will follow the model created by the Declaration by including the following sections in our proposals. Each section will have a centered, bolded header (like the local proposal, but more sections).

Ideas/model/theory: offer background on your issue/topic

Current situation: legislation, programs, details to explain

Evidence of problem: examples, individual cases, statistics, facts

Proposal for change/solution: new legislation, programs, etc.

Conclusion: Visualize the change and call to action!