

# Problem-Analysis Essay

## INTRODUCTION

Attention-getting opening

Thought-provoking question

Thesis

## BODY

Point 1

Statistics

Point 2

### Plenty of Sparkle, but How Much Substance?

Soda, soft drink, soda pop—no matter what you call it, this carbonated beverage is big among teens. It's a fuel. It's a liquid. It's everywhere—served in fast food places and fancy restaurants, dispensed out of vending machines, sold at convenience stores and supermarkets. It's cheap: Few other beverages cost less per quart. It's an image: The models in magazine ads and TV commercials flash their brilliant smiles as they partake of sparkling soda. Behind all the smiles, though, is there a side to the popularity of soft drinks that might not seem so sparkling? In fact, the role that soda plays in some teenagers' diets is a more serious problem than you might think, and could have an impact on teens' long-term health.

The problem is rooted in the fact that a substantial number of teenagers today are drinking a substantial number of sodas. According to data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in the years 1994–1996 one fourth of the thirteen- to eighteen-year-old boys who drank sodas consumed two and a half or more cans each day. One out of twenty drank five or more cans every twenty-four hours—that's more than a quart a day. Girls in this age bracket consumed slightly fewer cans a day, but overall estimates have teenagers drinking three times as much soda as teenagers did twenty-five years ago.

"So," you may ask, "what's wrong with drinking a lot of soda?" One cause for concern is the effect soda's ingredients can have on your

## Problem-Analysis Essay *continued*

Facts

Anecdote

Point 3

Example

Fact

body. A can of nondiet soda is loaded with sugar; in fact, soft drinks are the number one source of refined sugar for teenagers. All this sugar promotes tooth decay—especially since many people drink sodas between meals and seldom brush their teeth afterward. In addition, soda is a major source of caffeine, which some soda drinkers claim makes them anxious and jittery. My cousin Marcus, a junior, says that he once drank so much soda before a big test that he was worried he wouldn't be able to hold his pen still enough while he marked his answers.

The core of the problem with an excessive amount of soda, however, is what soda *doesn't* do for your body. Increasingly, large numbers of teenagers are drinking soda as a substitute for meals like breakfast. However, by filling up on soda at the expense of meals, teenagers run the risk of substituting empty calories for nutrients that are important to their long-term health. For example, a cup of fat-free milk gives you about 85 calories and healthy doses of protein, vitamin A, and bone-building calcium. A cup of 100 percent orange juice supplies about 120 calories, a lot of vitamin C, and some cancer-fighting antioxidants. A cup and a half of a cola-type soft drink, however, provides you with 151 calories, 37 milligrams of caffeine, and absolutely no vitamins, minerals, or protein. Maintaining an adequate intake of calcium and other nutrients is especially crucial in the teen years, when a person's body is growing and building bone mass that will be needed later in life.

## Problem-Analysis Essay *continued*

### CONCLUSION

Restatement of thesis

Replacing these nutrients with excessive amounts of sugar and caffeine is not the best investment you could make in your body's future.

Like most foods and drinks, soda in and of itself is not a health threat. However, teenagers who drink soft drinks need to be familiar with the health problems that excessive soft-drink consumption can cause. If they remain aware of the importance of healthy meals and good nutrition, teenagers who enjoy soft drinks can easily fit them into their diet in a way that increases their chances of a lifetime of good health.

# Problem-Analysis Essay

## Definition

As the name implies, a writer writes a **problem-analysis essay** to analyze a complex problem by examining contributing factors. This type of essay helps to create an increased awareness of the problem, as well as possibly motivating its readers to find solutions.

Many problem-analysis essays use the structure illustrated in the framework below. Print this framework and use it as a guide when you write your own problem-analysis essay.

## Framework

## Directions and Explanations

**Introduction**

- Catch your audience's attention.
- State the problem in your thesis.

**Start with something interesting** Begin your essay with a thought-provoking question or an anecdote to which your readers can easily relate.

**Make yourself clear** Clearly and concisely state your topic and main idea, alerting your readers to the seriousness of the problem. Your thesis should relate directly to the key points that follow.



**Body**

- State the key points in your analysis of the problem.
- Provide support for your key points.
- Organize ideas in a way that makes sense.

**Close to home** Maintain your readers' interest by pointing out several ways in which the problem affects them.

**Do not confuse the issue** To help readers follow your thoughts, make sure your key points follow a logical progression. Support each key point with facts, statistics, and examples.



**Conclusion**

- Restate your thesis.
- Emphasize the seriousness of the problem and its importance to your audience.

**Repeat yourself** Rather than copying your thesis statement verbatim, restate it. Word it so that readers are again reminded of how the problem affects them.