

## OPINION ESSAYS

An opinion essay is a formal piece of writing. It requires your opinion on a topic, which must be stated clearly, giving various viewpoints on the topic supported by reasons and / or examples. You should also include the opposing viewpoint in another paragraph.

### FORMAL STYLE

Essays are written in formal style. This means **you should use:**

- passive voice, impersonal constructions (e.g. It is argued that ... ; It is a common belief that ...)
- a range of advanced vocabulary (verbs, adjectives, abstract nouns, etc.) (e.g. heated debate concerning the controversial issue ...)
- formal linking words / phrases (e.g. furthermore, however, nonetheless)
- complex sentences with a variety of links, dependent clauses, etc. (e.g. Although it is widely accepted that compulsory military service, which provides an army with abundant manpower, is beneficial to a country's ability to defend itself, closer analysis of military efficiency suggests that it is advanced weaponry which plays a critical role in ...)
- inversion, especially in conditionals (e.g. Were this true, we would ...; Never has this been more obvious ...)

### You should not use:

- short forms (e.g. I'm, It's) except when these are part of a quotation
- colloquial expressions, phrasal verbs, idioms (e.g. lots of, put up with, be over the moon about...)
- simplistic vocabulary (e.g. Experts say they think this is bad ...)
- a series of short sentences (e.g. Many people think so. They are wrong.), simple linking words (e.g. and, but, so).

### BEGINNING AND ENDING ESSAYS

In the first paragraph, you should state the topic and / or your opinion, and you may include one or more of the following techniques

- Make reference to an unusual or striking idea / scene / situation

*e.g. Imagine millions of people coming home from school or work every day to sit staring at a wall for four hours.*

- Address the reader directly

*e.g. You may think this is an exaggeration. And / or ask a rhetorical question. e.g. Have you ever wondered what the world would be like without cars?*

- Start with a quotation or thought provoking statement.

*e.g. "Television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your home." David Frost once said.*

In the last paragraph, you should state your opinion and / or give a balanced consideration of the topic, and you may include one or more of the following techniques.

- Finish with a quotation.
- Ask a rhetorical question.
- Give the reader something to consider e.g. Perhaps then people will rediscover what it is like to actually communicate with each other.

### **USEFUL TIPS FOR ESSAYS.**

When writing an essay, you should:

- use formal, impersonal style;
- use topic sentences to introduce the subject of each paragraph / write well-developed paragraphs, giving reasons / examples;
- use generalizations (e.g. In most developed countries, education ...);
- use sequencing (e.g. Firstly, Secondly, etc.) and linking words / phrases (*e.g. however, although, etc.*);
- make references to other sources (e.g. Experts have proved that ...);
- use quotations, either word-for-word or in paraphrase, being careful to identify the source (*e.g. As Winston Churchill said, "...*);
- You should not:
  - use short forms, informal / colloquial language, etc.;
  - use very emotional language (e.g. I absolutely detest people who ...);
  - express personal opinions too strongly (e.g. I know ...), instead, use milder expressions (*e.g. It seems to me that ...*);
  - use over-generalization (e.g. All politicians are ...);
  - refer blindly to statistics without accurate reference to their source (*e.g. "A recent study showed..." – which study?*);
  - use clichés (e.g. Rome was not built in a day.);

- use personal examples (e.g. In my school ...).

**A successful opinion essay should have:**

- a) an introductory paragraph in which you state the topic and your opinion.
- b) a main body which consists of several paragraphs, each presenting a separate viewpoint supported by reasons. You also include a paragraph presenting the opposing viewpoint and reason why you think it is an unconvincing viewpoint; and
- c) a conclusion in which you restate your opinion using different words.

**Points to consider**

- Decide whether you agree or disagree with the subject of the topic, then make a list of your viewpoints and reasons.
- Write well-developed paragraphs, joining the sentences with appropriate linking words and phrases. Do not forget to start each paragraph with a topic sentence which summarizes what the paragraph is about.
- Linking words and phrases should also be used to join one paragraph with the other.

**Useful Expressions for Giving Opinions:**

*To my mind / To my way of thinking, ...*

*It is my (firm) belief / opinion / view / conviction (that) ...*

*In my opinion / view ...*

*I (firmly) believe ...*

*I am (not) convinced that ... I (do not) agree that / with ... , It strikes me that ...*

*My opinion is that,*

*I (definitely) feel / think that ...*

*I am inclined to believe that ... , It seems / appears to me ...*

*As far as I am concerned, ...*