

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, ...