

METHODOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

WRITING AN ESSAY

An essay is a piece of formal writing which discusses a particular issue, situation or problem. There are three main types of essays.

1. Argumentative essays present both sides of an issue, discussing points in favour of a particular topic as well as those against, or the advantages and disadvantages of a particular question. Each point should be supported by justifications, examples, and / or reasons. The writer's own opinion should be presented only in the final paragraph.

2. Opinion essays present the writer's personal opinion concerning the topic, clearly stated and supported by reasons and / or examples. The opposing viewpoint and reason should be included in a separate paragraph before the closing one, together with an argument that shows it is an unconvincing viewpoint. The writer's opinion should be included in the introduction, and summarized / restated in the conclusion.

3. Essays suggesting solutions to problems, in which the problem(s) associated with a particular issue or situation are analysed and possible solutions are put forward together with any expected results' consequences. The writer's opinion may be mentioned, directly or indirectly, in the introduction and / or conclusion.

A good essay should consist of:

- a) an introductory paragraph in which you clearly state the topic to be discussed;
- b) a main body in which points are clearly stated in separate paragraphs and exemplified or justified;
- c) a closing paragraph summarizing the main points of the essay, in which you state/restate your opinion, and / or give a balanced consideration of the topic.

Points to consider

- Present each point in a separate paragraph. A well-developed paragraph contains a clear topic sentence, which summarizes the contents of the paragraph, as well as a clear justification, explanation or example in support of the point presented.
- Well-known quotations (*As writer Somerset Maugham once said, "It is bad enough to know the past; it would be intolerable to know the future."*), rhetorical questions (*If people today are not concerned enough about tomorrow, will the future still be there for man?*) or thought-provoking statements (*The fact is that one's future is what one makes it. There is no such thing as chance.*) are useful devices to make your composition more interesting.
- Before you begin writing, you should always make a list of the points you will present.
- Do not use informal style (e.g. contracted forms, colloquial language, etc.) or very strong language (e.g. I know, I am sure ...)
- Use appropriate linking words / phrases to show the links between paragraphs, as well as to link sentences within paragraphs.

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;
- use sequencing (e.g. *Firstly, Secondly, etc.*) and linking words / phrases (e.g. *however, although, etc.*);
- make references to other sources;
- use quotations, either word-for-word or in paraphrase, being careful to identify the source;

You should not:

- use short forms, informal / colloquial language, etc.;
- use very emotional language;
- express personal opinions too strongly, instead, use milder expressions;
- use over-generalization;
- refer blindly to statistics without accurate reference to their source;
- use clichés;
- use personal examples.

Plan of three types of essays:

For and against	Opinion	Solution to problems
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
Paragraph 1	Paragraph 1	Paragraph 1
state topic (without stating your opinion)	state the topic and your opinion	state the problem and it's cause(s) / effect(s)
Main body	Main body	Main body
Paragraphs 2-3	Paragraphs 2-4	Paragraphs 2-5
arguments for and justifications, examples or reasons	viewpoints and reasons / examples	suggestions and results
Paragraphs 4-5	Paragraph 5	
arguments against and justifications, examples or reasons	opposing viewpoint and reason / examples	
Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion
Final paragraph	Final paragraph	Final paragraph
balanced consideration or opinion	summarize / restate your opinion	summarize your opinion

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
- Address the reader directly
- Start with a quotation or thought provoking statement.

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.

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

An “argumentative” essay is a formal piece of writing in which a topic is considered from opposing points of view. You should present both sides in a fair way by discussing them objectively and in equal detail.

A good essay of this type should consist of:

- a) an introductory paragraph in which you clearly state the topic to be discussed, without giving your opinion;
- b) a main body in which the points for and against along with your justifications, examples or reasons are presented in separate paragraphs; and
- c) a closing paragraph in which you state your opinion or give a balanced consideration of the topic.

Note: Opinion words (I think, I believe, In my opinion, etc.) can only be used in the closing paragraph where you give your opinion on the topic.

Points to consider

- Before you start writing your essay you should make a list of the points for and against.
- Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence which summarizes the topic of the paragraph.
- Do not use informal style or strong language to express your opinion. Express your opinion in a non-emotional way (e.g. *It seems that, I therefore feel*, etc.).
- Well-known quotations relevant to the topic you are writing about will make your composition more interesting.

Note: Although these are “balanced” arguments, if you feel that either the for or against side is stronger and should be supported, this side should be presented in paragraphs 4 & 5, thus leading the reader to your conclusion.

Useful expressions and linking words and phrases.

- To list points: *Firstly, First of all, In the first place, To begin / start with, Secondly, Thirdly, Finally.*
- To list advantages: *One / Another / A further / An additional (major) advantage of ... is ... , The main / greatest / first advantage of ... is ...*
- To list disadvantages: *One / Another / A further / An additional (major) disadvantage / drawback of ... The main / greatest / most serious / first disadvantage / drawback of ... Another negative aspect of ...*

- To introduce points / arguments for or against: *One (very convincing) point / argument in favour of... / against ... , A further common criticism of... / It could be argued that*

- To add more points to the same topic: *in addition (to this), furthermore, moreover, besides, apart from, what is more, as well as, not to mention (the fact) that, also, not only ... but also / as well, both ... and, There is another side to the issue / question / argument of ...*

- To make contrasting points: *although, though, even though, while, whilst, whereas, despite /in spite of (the fact that), regardless of the fact that, Opponents of ... argue / believe / claim that ... , The fact that ... contradicts the belief / idea that ... , While it is true to say that ..., in fact ... While / Although ..., it cannot be denied that ...*

- To introduce examples: *for example, for instance, such as, like, in particular, particularly, especially, This is (clearly) illustrated / shown by the fact that ... , One / A clear / striking / typical example of (this) ... , The fact that ... shows / illustrates that...*

- To emphasize a point: *clearly, obviously, it is obvious, naturally, of course, needless to say, indeed*

- To express reality: *In fact, the fact (of the matter) is, actually, in practice, it is a fact that, in effect*

- To make general statements: *as a (general) rule, generally, in general, on the whole, by and large, in most cases*

- To make partially correct statements: *to a certain extent / degree, to some extent / degree, in a way / sense, this is partly true (but), to a limited extent, there is some truth in (this), in some cases, up to a point*

- To explain/clarify a point: *in other words, that is to say, this / which means that*

- To express cause: *owing to, due to (fact that), on account of, on the ground that, given that, because, as, since*

- To express effect: *therefore, thus, as result / consequence, consequently, for this reason, if ... were to happen the effect / result would be ...*

- To express intention: *to, so as to, in order to, so that, with the intention*

- Conclusion expressing balanced considerations / opinion indirectly: *In conclusion, On balance, All things considered, taking everything into account / consideration, to conclude, to sum up, All in all, Finally / Lastly, it can / must be said / claimed that ... it seems / appears that ... it would seem that ..., it is Likely / unlikely / possible / foreseeable that ..., it is clear / obvious that ..., there is no / little doubt that ..., the best course of action would be to ..., achieving a balance between ... would be ... , it is true to say that ..., although it must be said that ..., it may be concluded / said that ..., All things considered, the obvious conclusion to be drawn is that ... / There is no absolute answer to the question of ..., In the light of this evidence, it is clear / obvious / etc. that ...*

- Conclusion expressing opinion directly: *In conclusion, On balance, All things considered, taking everything into account / consideration, To conclude, To sum up, All in all, it is my belief / opinion that..., I (firmly) believe / feel / think that ... I am convinced that ..., I am inclined to believe that ..., I (do not) agree that / with ..., Taking everything into account, I therefore conclude / feel / believe (that) ..., For the above-mentioned reasons, therefore, I (firmly) believe that ...*

Note:

- A “for and against” essay can end in a balanced consideration in which you restate that there are points for and against the topic using appropriate expressions from the table.
- Alternatively, it can end by expressing an opinion, in which case you state, directly or indirectly, that you are either in favour of or against the topic, using expressions from the table.

ESSAYS SUGGESTING SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

An essay discussing problems and suggesting solutions is a formal piece of writing. You should state the problem and its causes clearly, then present your suggestions and the expected results or consequences these might have.

A successful essay of this type should consist of:

- a) an introductory paragraph in which you clearly state the problem, what has caused it, and the consequences;
- b) a main body in which you present several suggested solutions, each in a separate paragraph together with its consequences / results; and
- c) a conclusion in which you summarize your opinion.

Points to consider

- Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence which summarizes what the paragraph is about
- Appropriate linking words and phrases should be used to show the connection between paragraphs as well as to link sentences within a paragraph.

Useful Language

• **To express cause:** since / because in view of / because of / owing to / due to (the fact that) ... The reason that ... / Why ... / for ... is that ...

To express effect: thus / therefore / so / consequently. as a result-consequence, the result of ... would be ... , would result in ...

To express purpose: so that ... so as / in order (not) to ... with the purpose of / intention of (-ing)

To express possibility-probability: It can / could / may / might, It is possible / probable / (unlikely / foreseeable, I certain that, is (un)likely to / bound to / certain to / possible / probable. The likelihood / possibility / probability of (-ing / noun) is

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.

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, ...