

Basic Methods and Steps for Writing an Essay

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ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the best known phenomena which can assist in development and improvement of a society. It is through writing that the knowledge and literature as well as culture of a society are being kept alive for centuries one after another. Writing as an important part of a society should always be developed, modernized, and the attention should be paid to this holly profession so that it can be able to transfer the information between generations in best of possible ways. We all may know that writing is a complex process that needs more thinking and wasting time. This complex task needs lots of caution in order to be performed as it should and must be. In this researched topic I have discussed various subjects regarding the essay writing such as: how to write an essay, the steps of writing an essay, why write an essay, prewriting and wow to research, plan and write an essay.

The purpose of the research on this topic is, in the first how to research and write an academic essay, steps and plans of writing an essay, essay writing checklist and the structure of the traditional essay writing and in secondly, familiarity with the method and kind of research is considered in this topic.

The product and result of the research work on this topic is, the study of vague details in the field of scientific research; especially, essay writing (basic essay structure, steps in the essay writing process and ...) which has added to the richness of this scientific – research article.

Aim: *My purpose to write this topic is to make clear how someone can write one literature essay by using best method of writing and best structure of essay. It is so much good for me to search about this subject because I faced with some words that before I never read it.*

Key words: *Essay, Language, Writing, Organization, Plan, References, introduction, outline, conclusion, preface, abstract, and etc.*

Introduction

An essay (one of the most common types of assignment at university) is a piece of academic writing generally between 500 and 5000 words long. The word ‘essay’ originally meant a first attempt or practice, which perhaps suggests some kind of provisional exploration. Essays are an intellectual exploration of a topic, involving looking at different arguments and evidence and developing the writer’s perspective. An essay is more ‘discursive’ than, say, a report – i.e. the points are developed in more depth and the language may be a little less concise. Typically, it will consist of a number of paragraphs that are not separated by subheadings or broken up by bullet points (unlike in a report). However, some lecturers may allow or encourage subdivisions and headings, as this can help both the writer and the reader with the structure of the content. In that case, an essay may begin to look more like the preferred format of some journal articles. Please note that different courses and programs at the Plymouth University have different expectations and assessment criteria regarding the content and structure of essays. Always consult your course handbook and/or the module leader if you are unsure about any points of style or presentation of your essay.

Why write an essay?

The purpose of writing an academic essay is to provide written evidence of your ability to research a topic, weigh arguments, organize your thoughts, express these thoughts in a logical, coherent and critical manner, and reach conclusions which follow from the evidence and the arguments you put forward. There will be a constraint on the number of words you can use so, inevitably, you need to be selective about content. (10: pp 4 - 5)

Organization

In a mythic vision, writers sit for hours, scribbling furiously to get down the incredibly brilliant words that seem to pour from their brains. But “mythic” is the operative word; it’s not the reality experienced by most writers. Whether you are writing an essay for the SAT, your college application, or graduation requirement, forget about the mythic vision. Even many professional writers find their craft to be a challenge. Journalist and biographer Gene Fowler noted that “writing is easy; all you do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until the drops of blood form on your forehead.” Essay writing is rarely that tortuous. But it is important to recognize that in order to do it well, you must commit yourself to a process. Writing a great essay doesn’t happen in one sitting. (Even when you are being

timed, as with the SAT, your goal is not to turn out a finished piece, but rather to show that you know how to begin one.)

When the clock is ticking, and you are faced with a blank sheet of paper, don't wait for inspiration to strike (sometimes it doesn't). While creativity and inspiration can play an important role in good essay writing, organization, discipline, and revision are critical. Whether you have to write an essay in class, during a test, or for any type of application, getting down to the business of writing means focusing on these three things. This chapter deals with organization. When you begin your essay with organization, you will have Organization, how write great essay *organization* guidance and direction through the writing process, especially if you are in a timed situation. Organization lets you see how your many developing ideas clearly maps out any type of essay you are required to write.

Organization also benefits the reader. By following one of the organizational methods at the end of this chapter, you will guide your reader from your first to last sentence. He or she will be able to see how the various points you make in your essay work together and how they support your thesis. The direction and purpose you get from organization helps your reader to believe what you are saying, and to willingly follow your lead. Practice the prewriting and organizational techniques detailed in this chapter. Determine ahead of time which work well for you, especially if you are going into a timed writing situation. Making the effort to think through what you want to say, and finding the best way to say it, will significantly improve your essay.

Perfect time

Regardless of how much time you have to complete your essay, try to follow these guidelines. Spend:

- Of your time prewriting and organizing
- Of your time writing
- Of your time revising and editing

Prewriting

Prewriting is the critical first step in creating a successful essay. Whether you are handed a topic, must come up with one on your own, or writing under a time constraint, taking the time to focus and shape your thoughts will result in a better final product. The six prewriting strategies explained below may be used both to generate new ideas and to clarify those you already have. Some strategies are better suited to a longer writing process such as the college admissions essay, while others may be adapted for when you have just a short period of time to complete an essay, as with the SAT. Prewriting strategies can also be used effectively when you are faced with a number of possible essay topics and must determine which is the best vehicle to express your unique thoughts and experiences.

Free writing

Free writing is probably the best-known prewriting technique. It works well when you have some thoughts on a topic, but can't envision them as an essay. Free writing also functions as a developmental tool, nurturing isolated ideas into an essay-worthy one. People who use organization of how to write great essay, this technique often surprise themselves with what comes out on paper. It is common to discover a thought or point you didn't realize you had.

Specifically, free writing means spending a predetermined period of time writing nonstop, focusing on a specific topic. In fact, free writing might better be called "flow writing," because the most important aspect to this prewriting technique is the flow, or momentum, that comes when you stay with it. It works best when you write in full sentences, but phrases are also effective. The key is to keep writing without regard for grammar, spelling, or worthiness of ideas. Your speed will help keep you from being able to edit or throw out any ideas.

Keys to successful free writing

- Resist the temptation to look back at what you have written during the process.
- If you can't stay on topic, keep writing anything to maintain the flow.
- Do not censor yourself; your free writing is not going to be seen by others, so commit every thought to paper.
- Follow your ideas wherever they lead you.
- When finished, read your free writing with a highlighter, noting the most interesting and strongest ideas.
- Try the process again after you have focused your topic; more ideas may be generated.

How to brainstorm

- If you are not already being timed, set a timer for at least five minutes (the more time you spend, the more and better ideas you will probably come up with).
- List every word or phrase that comes to mind about your topic. If you have not selected a topic, write in answers to the questions, "What do I have to say to my audience?" or "What do I want my audience to know about me?"

- As with free writing, do not edit or censor any ideas, and ignore the rules of spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- When you are finished, look over the list carefully. Cross out useless information and organize what is left. Categorize similar items. (9: pp 11 – 14)

How to research, plan and write an essay

Writing an essay, no matter what the topic, is a complex process; it requires a lot of practice, and unfortunately no formula can guarantee good written work. There is no right or wrong way of approaching an essay; however there are certain tasks that should help you produce a good piece of work.

Step 1, interpret the question and identify the key topics the first: Crucial step is to interpret the question; essays questions use specific terms and which reveal how the question might be answered. Question analysis is a crucial part of the essay writing process; the most common reason why students fail assignments is because they do not read or analyses the question correctly. One method of question analysis is the ‘T.A.P. model’. First identify the **Topic** - what the main theme is; then the **Action(s)**, i.e. what you have got to do; and finally the **Parameters** – the scope or confines of the task. It is worth spending a bit of time on this, making sure you are clear on what is being asked of you. If are still not clear, contact your tutor **BEFORE** you start work on the assignment.

Step 2, organize your time: You need to plan your time carefully, find out when the essay is due and work backwards, allowing sufficient time for proofreading and re-drafting. You will need to spend at least half your time on research and gathering information, and the other half on writing. Construct a weekly schedule (refer to our study guide on getting organized for an example of this), and block out set periods of time during each week to work on your essay. Keep your schedule to hand and consult it regularly.

Step 3, Read (do your research, make notes): There are numerous sources for you to make use of when collecting relevant information, much of it available in the University library as well as online. These sources include academic texts (books and journals); government statistics; newspapers and magazines; and research reports. This gathering and researching stage is important as the quality of your written material will reflect the range and quality of information you have gathered.

Step 4, Think (and establish your position): Think about what conclusions your reading has led you to draw. Then write a brief outline of what you would like the essay to say. Keep this outline to hand and refer to it on a regular basis. This will help keep you on the right track and prevent you from over- or under-writing key sections.

Step 5, Plan (to give your writing structure): Arranging your notes into a logical order will help you develop a structure for your work. A well-structured essay comprises an introduction, main body and conclusion. Each of these sections has a distinct purpose and is equally important. The introduction is essentially a map for the reader; it sets out the path that your essay will follow. The purpose of the main body is to set out your argument; the conclusion draws together the main threads of your argument as you summaries the most important points and then show that you have answered the question.

Step 6, writing: You do not have to write the various sections of the essay in the order that they appear in the final draft. Some people write the Introduction last, after the main body of work has been written. On the other hand, if you’ve done plenty of planning, then writing the introduction first can give you a clear idea where you are going – as can starting with the conclusion. This might help keep your writing more focused. Given that your essay or assignment is fundamentally your exploration of the topic, its purpose is to present your well researched argument. (7: pp 11 - 15)

Step 7, Referencing: It is important to identify the sources of material you use, whether quoting from (i.e. using their exact words) or paraphrasing (changing the wording of) the work of others. Whether you are quoting or paraphrasing the work of others, you must acknowledge the original author and include the reference, both within the essay and in an organized list at the end in the ‘reference list’. Referencing is not really a step in its own right but rather something you should begin as soon as you start to gather information about different sources: keep track of what material comes from where so that you can easily include the correct references in your writing. If you are not sure whether to reference something or not, err on the side of caution and reference it. Omitting references is not acceptable and may result in losing marks or even failing an assignment and being accused of plagiarism.

Step 8, Review marker’s feedback: If your marker has given your comments about your writing, it is really valuable to think about how you might put their suggestions into practice next time. It will probably help you to look through your work and see if you can spot where you’ve lost marks, and consider swapping with a friend so you can help each other. (8: pp 111 - 114)

Essay – writing checklist

Before you submit your work check it over one more time. Use the list below to help you:

1. Does the essay answer the question/deal with the topic that was set? (Read the brief again)
2. Does it cover all the key points and a range of arguments or viewpoints? (Have you missed one side of the argument?)

3. Have you covered the main points in sufficient depth? (Use the Critical Thinking Model in study guide 8)
4. Is the essay analytical in style and questioning in approach? (as above)
5. Have you developed and sustained the argument throughout the essay? (Check what you're actually saying)
6. Is the argument logical and realistic? (as above)
7. Is the content accurate and relevant? (check your sources are reliable and up to date)
8. Is the material logically arranged? (check the structure by drawing up a contents list)
9. Is there a sense of direction, a reason why one paragraph follows another? (Consider doing some mind mapping, or going back to ones you've already made)
10. Is each main point well supported by examples and argument? (check your use of evidence)
11. Does it clearly distinguish your ideas from those of others? (make sure there's a reference by every bit you've borrowed)
12. Do you acknowledge all sources, in the main body and at the end? (Check your referencing, and Plymouth University guidelines on plagiarism)
13. Have you used an appropriate number and range of sources? (You don't have to read the whole library, but one or two authors' viewpoints won't be enough)
14. Is the essay the correct length? (Check the brief)
15. Have you included a word count? (On the cover sheet)
16. Have you written the work in an appropriate style, and simply and clearly? (Would an academic who wasn't a specialist in your subject understand it?)
17. Is the grammar, punctuation and spelling correct? (Spell-check, grammar-check, and use a dictionary and grammar guide)
18. Have figures and tables been used appropriately and referenced? (check your guidelines or the generic Plymouth University referencing guidelines)
19. Is the essay well-presented, with the right spacing, font, font size and cover sheet? (Check your handbook). (6: pp 18 - 20)

Structure of the traditional essay

Each section, the introduction, body and conclusion, has a specific purpose, which means the reader will be looking for expected features. A traditional essay does not include headings. As such it will appear as a series of paragraphs, with each paragraph having a place and purpose which the writer needs to make clear in topic sentences at the beginning of each paragraph. However, lecturers are becoming more flexible in their expectations and in some cases are allowing students to use headings in their essays. This has sometimes been referred to as a 'report style essay'. Always confirm with your lecturer if headings are allowed if you are not sure. Many students find using headings helps them structure their essay. This is true for many DE students as headings are commonly used in workplace writing. If this is true for you and headings are not allowed, use headings in your draft, then convert them to topic sentences, before you submit your essay. (1: pp 74 – 76)

Referencing in an essay

You will be required to reference both *within* your essay and *at the end* of your essay in a list of references. You are required to reference every time you use the work of someone else, whether you have changed their words (paraphrased) or used their exact words (direct quoted). If you are not sure what this means refer to the referencing site for further explanation and examples or to the referencing section in the online essay writing tutorial. (3: p 4)

How should I present my work?

Some students mistakenly think that presentation of an essay refers to fancy headings, clever shading and elaborate fonts. It isn't – and the extra time spent won't result in extra marks – in some cases quite the opposite. Professionally presented, clear, easy to read text is the key. Always refer to your subject outline for specific instructions from your lecturer. If you are still unclear, post a message on your subject forum or ask your marker. It is likely that other students may have the same questions or perhaps the question has already been answered on your forum.

In the absence of any specific directions, the following points are a general guide for presenting assignments.

- Assignments should be typed
- Use 1 1/2 spacing. (Some lecturers may ask for double spacing.)
- Use 2.5 cm margins either sides or a 5 cm left margin. Markers need space to be able to include their comments.
- Use Times New Roman font 12pt
- Include a separate title page with your name, student number, subject codes questions and answers.

- Number your pages
- Use a header or footer with your name and student number on each page
- Always keep a copy of your assignments. Both, a hard copy and an electronic copy.
- Most importantly, always use your spelling and grammar checker, but remember that this does not pick up all errors. You must still manually and carefully edit your work. (5: pp 26 – 28).

Basic essay structure

Introduction

The introduction to your essay is an important paragraph. It is the first thing the reader sees. A good introduction should orientate the reader to the general topic, identify the focus or purpose of the essay, outline the scope, that is, the points to be covered, noting any limitations and finish by identifying the thesis. An introduction is usually one paragraph, although this is not always the case, particularly with long essays. Some students define key terms in the introduction. Others signal within the ‘scope’ that key terms will be defined in the essay. If this is the case, do this at the beginning of the body of the essay. The decision about where to define key terms is probably guided by the length of the definition discussion. A simple definition may sit well in the introduction. A protracted definition may be distracting and better dealt with in the body of the essay. Points 1 and 2 above are determined by your essay question. Point 3 will be guided by the question, your research and the thesis. Point 4 is important. It identifies what you have learnt, your argument or viewpoint. The thesis will drive your essay. More information on thesis statements follows: A **thesis** statement is your line of argument, your viewpoint. You might agree, disagree or perhaps qualify your argument in some way so that it agrees with part of the question. For example, you might be asked to discuss this statement: *The UAI (university admissions index) is a reliable predictor of success at university.* Some students may argue that it is. Some may argue that it isn’t. Others may argue that it is a useful but not reliable predictor. A critical thinker might challenge the concept of success and argue that the UAI has little to do with success in its broad sense.

Body

The body of an essay is where you develop your essay. This occurs in a series of paragraphs with each paragraph logically flowing to the next. Thus a good use of topic sentences and correct paragraph structure are important. The first sentence of each paragraph, often referred to as a topic sentence, introduces the paragraph by stating and summarizing the main point being made in the paragraph. Topic sentences often contain transition signals, which aid in the smooth transition from one paragraph to the next. This first sentence should inform the reader of the point you are making and how this paragraph relates to the question. In fact, if the reader were to scan your topic sentences, they should be able to obtain a sketch of the entire essay. This sketch should show the logical progression of the points you are making. Absence of topic sentences leaves the reader wondering what you are trying to say and why, ultimately confusing the reader. (4: pp 20 - 24)

Organization methods

With the exception of concept mapping and webbing, prewriting notes need organization before the writing of a first draft. There are many effective ways to organize your material before you start your first draft, so don’t get hung up trying to find the one right way. Some people like outlines, both creating them and working from them. Others find them ineffective and should look at different techniques for imposing a scheme onto their prewriting notes.

Outline

Creating an outline begins with a reading of your prewriting notes. First, group related ideas together, looking for major topics (which can be headings) and minor ones (which can be subheadings, examples, or details). Define your major points, and rearrange them until they make sense and follow a logical progression. You will be able to see the relationships between your ideas as you outline them, and determine their importance. If you need more supporting details or facts—subcategories—you can add them now. As you outline your information, use one-word topics, short phrases, or write out full sentences for each point on your outline.

If your prewriting notes are somewhat organized, you can use the outlining feature included in most word-processing programs to create an outline. Otherwise, arrange them yourself in a standard outline form using Roman and Arabic numerals and upper and lower case letters:

Conclusion

The conclusion is also an important paragraph in your essay. It is usually one paragraph in length and should reflect what you said you were going to do in your introduction. The conclusion summarizes what you’ve said in your essay and reaffirms your thesis. Do not introduce new material. Most students begin their concluding paragraph with a transition signal, such as, ‘In conclusion’ or ‘In summary’. (9: p 19)

Steps in the essay writing process

Although no two writers work in the same way, there is a general system that many good writers follow. This system involves following the step-by-step process outlined below. Skim through the

main points now, and when you need to write an essay, checks out the extra information about each point.

1. Analyze the question
 - underline key words
 - put question into own words
 - look for hints on structure
2. 'Brainstorm' the question
 - To take stock of what you already know
 - To give you a focus for your reading
 - To give you the beginnings of a plan
3. Start your research
 - Begin with general reading
 - Look for potential ways to structure your essay
 - Remember to record bibliographical details and page numbers of references as you go
4. Plan the essay
 - Write down the main points/arguments, preferably using a mind map.
 - Write any secondary points and their relationship to the main points.
5. Continue your research
 - This is focused research, where you seek further information about each of the main points/arguments
6. Write!
 - Most people find it easier to concentrate on the body first, then the conclusion, followed by the introduction
 - Decide on a logical order for your points/arguments
 - Remember that each paragraph should contain one idea, which is stated in the topic sentence. Other sentences in the paragraph should explain, give evidence for and possibly give examples.
 - Concentrate on one point at a time, but in your final editing, make sure each paragraph is linked to the next
 - Expect to write several drafts
 - Don't worry about spelling, grammar, sentence structure or finding the 'right' word until you have finalized the content of the essay. (2: pp 5 - 9)

Conclusion

The works presented in this pamphlet describe various steps of writing essay and basic structure of essay. As a whole this pamphlet solved lots of problems and plenty of my own questions regarding writing skills. This pamphlet has answered lots of questions regarding effective writing, and writing styles. For instance "how to write correctly", "what are the better ways to build structure of supper essays" and so on. By reading this pamphlet we can get to know how to solve the problems we are faced with writing various structure of essay, how to make an interesting essay.

In this researched topic I mostly emphasize to follow the basic continual steps. It is important that everything in writing structure comes on their place and shows our essay clearly. When we are writing an essay by correct structure it is really interesting for readers to continue the reading of our topic. Our goal to writing an interesting and influent topic is attract the readers. To conclude this pamphlet I would like to say that today the traditional writing skills are used in correct structures and follow the steps of writing in fluently. Start with introduction and finish with conclusion and do not use frequently one word in a good essay. So, now by ordering this monograph I would help to anyone that interest to write essay and provide them standard structure and methodic ways.

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