

Ace your essay



Activity 1: “Going to university is too expensive and not worth it”

In groups discuss this statement, giving arguments for and against using the evidence you have found (15mins).



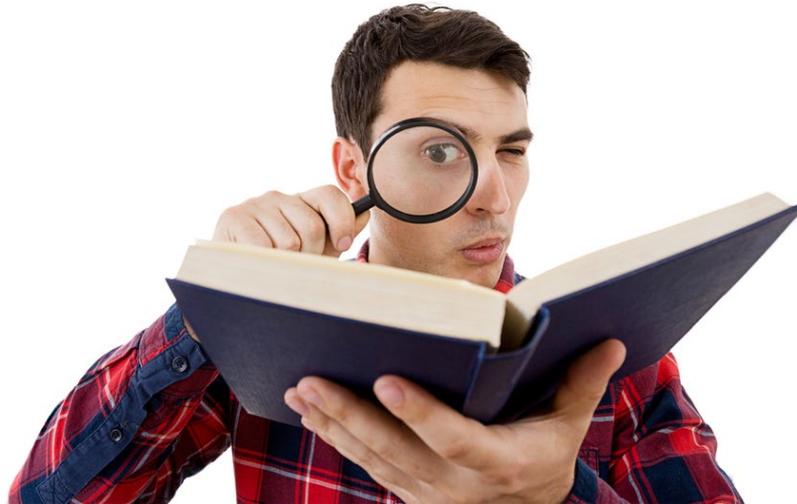


What is an essay and why is it important?

- It is a way of showing an opinion you have formed by reading text.
- It shows your interpretation (working out what things mean) of the text;
- It is backed up with evidence – this shows it is firmly based on the text, not just random ideas.
- Analysing an essay question is **VERY** important.
- Before you start think about what the question is asking you. Look at the words used in the essay question...

Essay question words

Words such as 'explain', 'evaluate' or 'analyse' – typical question words used in essay titles – provide a useful indication of how your essay should be structured. They often require varying degrees of critical responses. Sometimes, they may simply require a descriptive answer.





Some examples are listed below:

Evaluate - It is essential to provide information on both sides of the debate using evidence from a wide range of academic sources.

Discuss - Give a detailed examination of the topic by including knowledge of the various perspectives put forward by other scholars in relation to it. What are your thoughts on the subject based on the general debates in the literature?

Analyse - This requires you to break the essay topic down into its fundamental parts. Once you have done this, it's also important that you critically (more on this word later) examine each part

Explore – your answer must be exploratory and it's important that you adopt a questioning approach when answering this question. In the nature of such essays, you should give an overview of all viewpoints before providing any of your own arguments.

To what extent - this asks how far you agree with a proposition put forward in the question. This requires a very in-depth assessment of the topic, and especially of the evidence used to present your argument.

When you first get your essay question, always try to understand what it is asking you to do. Look at the question word(s) and think about their meaning before you launch into planning what to write.

Planning

Planning your essay is important, don't just jump in and start writing without understanding the question.

If you get stuck trying to do the first paragraph.. Move on to the 'for' and 'against'.. And then go back to the start after.



Using **mind maps**, **highlighting important parts** or **writing notes** can help.

Depending on the length of the essay it is **sometimes useful to have several arguments** for and against.

Its also okay not to have made up your mind either way till after you have written down for and against points.

You will have been given a number of texts that will help you answer the question. You will need to read the literature supplied and formulate your evidence using quotes and theoretical standpoints.

Ok let's look at structure...

Beginning

If you were asked an exam question in person, how would you reply?

Ideally you would try to be as concise as possible giving the overall points and your resulting

- In the opening to an essay, you should give your answer in a concise way, making a clear statement in response to the question
- You would then briefly explain how you've come to that conclusion.
- You can add some examples of for and against arguments if you wish, however this will be explored in more detail in the main body of the essay.

The main body ...

- You should have made some **points** in your nutshell introduction that you now need to expand upon;
- When writing your essay focus on developing these **points** with **evidence**.
- This will show your response is firmly grounded in the text and that you can **explain** the **effects** of the **methods** that the writer has used and their **intended purpose**.

Conclusion ...

- Conclusion might be a big word, but it's really easy;
- You are simply returning to the original question/task and answering it with a brief summary.
- This should illustrate how you've arrived at your conclusion.



PEE

You should be doing this in each paragraph;

- Make your **point** – a statement about the poem/novel that relates to the question and that you have hopefully mentioned in your introduction;
- Then use **evidence** to back up what you are saying – to prove that you know what you are talking about and haven't just made it up;
- Then **explain** the **effects** that the **language** has on the reader – that's you – how does it make you **feel**, what does it tell us about the situation?

Now you try

P
Point

Sum up the
main idea in
your
paragraph.

- *In my opinion...*
- *Arguably...*
- *The writer uses...*
- *Similarly*
- *Firstly...*
- *Secondly...*
- *Both...*
- *In contrast...*
- *One of the language features used is...*

E
Evidence

Provide Evidence for
the point you are
making.

- *For example...*
- *An example of this is...*
- *This is shown...*
- *This can be seen...*
- *This is demonstrated when...*
- *We know this because...*
- *The evidence for this is...*

E
Explanation

Why is the quotation
significant?
What effect does the
quotation have on the
reader?
Why has the writer used
this technique?

- *This shows*
- *This suggests...*
- *This implies...*
- *This is effective because...*
- *The writer has chosen this technique because...*
- *This would make the reader feel...*
- *This has been used because...*

Lets look at this together

In groups let's look at this example:



- Landlines are unnecessary now that we have mobiles (Point)
- Major telecomm companies state that landline usage has dropped significantly since the worldwide distribution of smartphones'. (Evidence)
- This proves that mobile phones are becoming unnecessary now. The evidence has come from a reliable source, which illustrates that mobile phones are more cost effective and so better than landlines. (Explanation)

Using quotations effectively ...

Embed;

- This means you are essentially putting your evidence into your sentence;
- You can use a word or phrase, yes that does count as evidence, and you make it part of your own writing, which shows you really understand how it works;
- **TIP** avoid using long quotations; your explanations should do the work for you. The examiner will not be fooled into thinking that half a page of quotations is your own work.

Next step ...

- You now have your introduction;
- You have your plan;
- Now try writing the body of the essay;
- Use evidence effectively by embedding it into your sentences;
- Write a snappy conclusion that puts your final ideas back into that essay.



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**Any
Questions?**