

Essay Writing Guidelines

Essay

The French word *assai* has the following meanings: *trial, test, experience*.

The English word *essay* means: a) *sketch, outline, composition*, b) *effort, trial*.

The foreign words dictionary gives the following definition of the word *essay*: *genre of critique, publicism, etc. – prose sketch, presenting general or preliminary ideas about a subject or event, often casual*.

Classic essay that students write when entering higher institutions is a short composition free of artistic inventions. The aim of such essay is to explain/describe the topic with the help of various arguments. It is important to support the ideas with arguments and examples.

How to write an essay?

To write a creative essay is not an easy task. It is an individual task. There are no standards, “recipes” for an ideal essay. However there certain rules that can help you to improve writing skills. First of all, a writer should have a clear idea about the subject – the topic of the essay. To understand why you are writing this essay and who will read it is equally important. In order to keep your reader interested, it is necessary to select exact, expressive, strong words while describing your thoughts and feelings. The ability to use words adequately, ability to write clearly, logically, figuratively and effectively is an important and useful quality.

According to the experts in the field of effective communication writing an essay involves several stages: 1) *planning*, 2) *preparation*, 3) *writing*, 4) *review*, 5) *corrections*.

Planning (identifying the aim, potential reader, core ideas, information sources, dates due)

Before you start writing ask yourself the following questions:

- why am I writing this?
- who is going to read my work?
- what thoughts, actions do I expect from my readers?
- what ideas do I want to share?
- where can I find the information needed?
- when should I finish the work?

Preparation (collection of information, thesis building, development of the essay structure, defining the style, methods)

Essay Structure

Usually a message both written and oral consists of three composing parts: **introduction**, **core (central part)**, **conclusion**.

- *Introduction* should be lively, clear, strong and original. From the very beginning you should attract your reader, get him/her interested in what you are saying. The introduction tells (directly or indirectly) about the aim of the work. It helps to attract the reader, to introduce the topic of the discussion, to state your position. It is recommended to use about 50 (out of 500) words to write an introduction.
- *Central Part (core)* is a consistent discussion on the topic (storyline).
 - It consists of a number of components, logically and stylistically interconnected;
 - Presents the author’s position, ideas and opinions;
 - Develops of the main ideas;

- Supports each argument with the arguments and examples (from own experience, history, folklore and fiction);
- Contains testimonies and references (quotations, maxims, etc.);
- Defines conditions (what? how? where? when?);
- Figuratively communicates the author's opinions and ideas;
- Uses various effective and expressive means;
- Creates a storyline indicating the essay's aim and direction.

Recommendations: The central part of the essay should not exceed 400 words (out of 500) – about 200 words to describe the main ideas, 200 – arguments and examples to support these ideas.

The preparation stage is over when you have:

- ✚ Collected all important information:
 yes _____ **no** _____
- ✚ Systematized the information and your thoughts:
 yes _____ **no** _____
- ✚ Defined the essay structure:
 yes _____ **no** _____
- ✚ Selected the essay style, methods:
 yes _____ **no** _____

Writing

You already know what results you would like to achieve with your “message”. You have the facts supporting your ideas. You have systemized the information and know in which order you are going to present the information. Now you just need to transform the theses into a logical story – expression of your thoughts.

With the theses and notes at hand you are ready to write your first draft essay. You can start from the beginning and step by step move towards the conclusion. You can start somewhere in the middle. In a number of cases it is quite difficult to write an introduction and conclusion because their roles are crucial for the success of your essay. You can handle these parts after you finish the central part of your work.

Professionals suggest taking the test below when writing your first draft:

- ✚ Do you clearly understand your aim?
 yes _____ **no** _____
- ✚ Do you know your readers?
 yes _____ **no** _____
- ✚ Do you clearly understand the ideas that you want to share?
 yes _____ **no** _____
- ✚ Have you drafted an introduction?
 yes _____ **no** _____
- ✚ Have you drafted a central part?
 yes _____ **no** _____
- ✚ Have you drafted a conclusion?
 yes _____ **no** _____

✚ Did you keep your aim and your readers in mind when writing your first draft?
yes _____ *no* _____

Review

Take a break (a few days). This will help you to get a fresh look at your work when you start to work on the next, very important stage of your essay – review. Review means text editing with the focus on quality and effectiveness of your essay: clarity of your thoughts, coherence, logic, grammatical correctness and style.

Ask yourself:

✚ Is the introduction interesting?
yes _____ *no* _____

✚ Does the introduction reveal the key idea of the essay?
yes _____ *no* _____

✚ Can you identify the main ideas in the central part of the essay?
yes _____ *no* _____

✚ Are there enough arguments and examples in the essay?
yes _____ *no* _____

✚ Is the text of the central part of the essay divided into logical paragraphs?
yes _____ *no* _____

✚ Does the conclusion underline the main thoughts and future prospects for the development of your ideas?
yes _____ *no* _____

✚ Does the conclusion help a reader to clearly understand your ideas and the essay topic?
yes _____ *no* _____

✚ Does every paragraph of your essay appeal (directly or indirectly) to a reader?
yes _____ *no* _____

If you answer to all of the questions is “yes” you can start working on the next stage of your essay writing.

Correcting Mistakes

Among the essay evaluation criteria are the absence of mistakes and their structure. Mistakes can distract from the essence of the essay. Correcting mistakes is a very important part of the essay writing process. It involves evaluation of the essay in terms of clarity of the statements, orthography, punctuation and composition.

Grammatical Correctness:

Check out the words spelling and grammar in the dictionaries and reference books. Check the words compatibility and punctuation.

Composition:

The first impression from your essay depends on how it looks. If it looks neat and attractive, the first reaction will be a positive one.

Overall, composition is how the information is arranged on a page. If the page is too “busy” (too much text, not enough blank spaces) it will be difficult to read and comprehend the information.

It is easier to read the text if it is divided into short paragraphs. Long sentences and paragraphs make a reader tired. Make the text accessible, easy to read by leaving enough blank spaces on the margins and between the paragraphs.

Evaluate all the stages of the process, ask yourself:

1. Does your essay fully describe the selected topic?
2. Does your essay contain your (author's) position? How interesting and original is it?
3. Is your essay effective? What is the likelihood that a reader would understand your thoughts and feelings and would share your opinion?
4. Is all the necessary information included in the essay (Who? What? When? Why? How?)?
5. Is your text focused on your reader?
6. Is your text composed in a logical way?
7. How interesting is the introduction?
8. How persuasive is the conclusion?
9. How coherent, concise and illustrative is the information presented in the central part of your essay?
10. Is there a clear thematic sentence in each of the paragraphs?
11. Are the facts and arguments used in the essay reliable?
12. Have you corrected all the mistakes and inaccuracies?
13. Have you used the correct punctuation and orthography?
14. Does your essay look well?
15. Have you followed the selected style?
16. Does your essay meet the requirements of the Contest (size, genre, dates, etc)?

Please fill in the table:

<i>Question #</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>More “yes” than “no”</i>	<i>More “no” than “yes”</i>	<i>No</i>
1				
2				
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Work on the questions that you answered negatively.

- 1) Read your essay out loud. You would probably want to change a few things after this experiment.
- 2) Put your essay away for a while. This will help you to get a fresh look at it when you review it again.
- 3) Ask the person/people whose opinion is important to you to read your essay. Ask them what they think about the content, form and style of the essay. Make sure that the thoughts and feeling that you want to share are adequately understood. Try not to get offended when listening to the criticisms. Be an attentive listener. Find out which points your readers don't agree with. Why do they not share your point of view? Did they understand correctly what your message was? Remember: a reviewer criticizes the text, not the author.

Check your essay one more time. Read your essay. Answer the following questions:

1. What is the main idea?
2. Are there arguments and facts to support the idea of the essay?
3. Are there examples to support the arguments? If so, do these examples help to understand the topic/theme better?
4. Did you have to re-read the essay in order to answer the questions 1 through 3?
5. Is your name mentioned in the essay?