

Essay Planning and Tips

Before you write your essay:

❖ Write what you know:

-If you can choose your topic, make sure you have enough ideas to write a complete essay about the one you have chosen. Write from your own perspective, or be prepared to fully research the topic.

-Write down a few ideas; do you really have enough, or would another topic be better? Sometimes, writing from an opposing viewpoint makes for a better essay.

❖ Prewriting:

-Always start with prewriting to collect ideas in one place and get rid of irrelevant ones. Jot down a few ideas, but a WEB is a good way of collecting and arranging relevant ideas. You can immediately see what fits and what doesn't. (Just because an idea seems to be a good one, it doesn't mean that it fits in that particular essay.)

-Cross out any ideas that are not about the one topic, or any that are weak; all ideas must be relevant so you have a unified piece of writing.

-Look at your ideas; do you have a main idea for a thesis that can be fully explained and developed into a good, coherent essay?

-From your web and prewriting, select the best three or four points that support your main idea. These will be the basis for your paragraphs.

❖ Ordering:

-Put your ideas into a logical order. Number them according to how strongly they support the thesis. The second strongest supporting idea should be your first body paragraph, the third strongest should be the second body

paragraph, and the strongest should be the last body paragraph. Sandwich your weakest points in the middle.

❖ Write an Outline:

-Write a thesis statement, three supporting topic sentences, and list your main points and examples. This will be the blueprint for your essay. If it is well-planned, the essay will be easier to write and flow more logically.

When you write your essay:

❖ Include transitions:

-Remember that the essay needs to flow smoothly and logically from one idea to the next. Transitions help with this.

-Use transitions between sentences to create a unified paragraph.

Examples: and, but, therefore, although, since, however, nevertheless, additionally, consequently, similarly, again, secondly, furthermore

-Use transitions between paragraphs to connect one supporting point to the next. The simplest way of doing this is the echo transition. Repeat the main idea of the last paragraph at the beginning of the next, combining it with the topic sentence of that next paragraph. Example: *Even though Macbeth is influenced by the three witches, his wife is the true catalyst in his decision to kill Duncan.* The first italicized part of the sentence echoes the main idea of the previous paragraph, while the second part introduces the main idea of the new paragraph.

Words and phrases to avoid:

❖ Personal pronouns in literary and expository essays:

I, me, you, we

- ❖ "one" meaning "a person"
- ❖ I think, I believe, I feel: if you are writing it, the reader will understand that is what you believe, so there is no need to state it.
- ❖ In conclusion: just state what your conclusion is.
- ❖ Etc., e.g., contractions, abbreviations, without previously giving the full versions: use full forms in a formal essay writing format.
- ❖ Clichés: avoid old and over used words and phrases.
- ❖ Repetition of the same word or phrase: use synonyms or rewrite.
- ❖ Do not use the words "there is/there are"; reword the sentence.
- ❖ The use of passive voice; instead of "The theme has been conveyed by the use of figurative language," write, "The use of figurative language conveys the theme.
- ❖ Clichés! Old and worn out words and phrases are to be avoided at all costs!