

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

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## **The Essay**

### **Essay Writing**

#### **1 Definition**

Brandon (2005), Meyer (2005), O'Donnell and Paiva (1993) Zemach and Rumisek (2003), Oshima and Hogue (1999) and Reid (1988) define an essay as a group of paragraphs about a single subject. It commonly composed of the introduction including a thesis statement, the body and the conclusion.

#### **2 Framework for Essays**

An essay involve a number of elements. The introduction, body and conclusion are the basic components of any essay. Each one of these parts has its own purposes. Reid (1988), O'Donnell and Paiva (1993), Clouse (1998), Zemach and Rumisek (2003) and Meyer (2005) explain that an essay is composed of 3 parts as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Body paragraphs
3. Conclusion

##### **2.1 Introduction**

The introduction is the first paragraph that initiates the essay and provides insight about the whole topic. It is a general overview of the whole essay that tends to attract the reader's attention and also cites the main idea of the essay or the writer's purpose. The quality of the introduction determines whether the essay gets read in the first place. A proper introduction gives the reader a first impression and motivates the reader to read the whole essay.

An introduction generally begins with a general, interest-grabbing remark that will identify the topic, form the tone and lead the reader from the broad view of the topic to the purpose of the writing. It generally ends with a thesis statement which contains the main idea of the essay. It helps the reader to recognise what the whole essay is all about. It should begin with a hook that attract the reader's attention and stimulate their curiosity. It could be a quote, an

analogy, a question... . After attracting the reader's interest, the introduction should present some background information on the topic.

The introductory paragraph is composed of two parts: the general statements and the thesis statement.

### **The General Statement**

General statements are the first few sentences that provide background information on the topic and grab the reader's attention. It also drives into the thesis statement which is mainly the last sentence in the paragraph.

Clouse (1998), Brandon (2005) suggest several ways to attract readers' attention as follows:

- Give background information : Giving fact or background information helps in providing connection between the reader to the topic. The writer determines a certain length of background information that the reader will need to understand the topic. It will help the reader to grasp the topic and the writer's intention.
- Present a brief description : The purpose of the description is to design a picture in the reader's mind. Using vivid words will lead to setting a scene as a beginning of the essay.
- Tell a brief story or an incident : The story can attract the reader's attention and lead him/her to the essay. The writer should be sure that the story is short, to the point and linked to the topic in order to be interesting. It can also start with a part of a conversation.
- Ask a question : Asking a question builds a common interest with the readers and stimulate their curiosity. A question should be one of which the answer is unpredictable.
- State a quotation : A quotation can be used as a springboard for an essay. A quotation should not be long, boring or irrelevant. It is not required to analyse the quotation as it is used only to start the essay.
- Open with an example : Examples attract the reader's interest and at the same time confirm the truth of the thesis. Examples make writing more informative and illustrative.

### **The Thesis Statement**

The thesis statement is the sentence that presents the main idea of the essay. It covers all the points in the essay that is why it should be general. It also guides or introduces the rest of the essay. It is generally stated at the end of the introduction paragraph. The thesis statement is explained and reviewed with supporting ideas in the body of the essay. Definitions of a thesis statement vary somewhat, but almost all instructors take a thesis to mean the central idea, opinion, assertion, claim or attitude of the paper. At the core of a thesis statement is the writer's controlling idea on the topic.

Reid (1988) proposes that when writing introduction, the writer should avoid apologies, complaints, personal problems and too broad statements. In addition, Raimes (2005) explains that the writer should state context and background information without assuming that the reader have knowledge about the topic. The length of the introduction part may differ but the common length is between three to five sentences.

## **2.2 Body**

The body of the essay supports the main point of the thesis statement. These paragraphs explain the thesis statement by presenting facts, statistics, examples, illustrations or descriptions. A topic sentence and supporting details are included in each paragraph.

The supporting details in an essay should be well organised for the sake that the reader will not get lost and confused. Generally, there are three used patterns, chronological order, spatial order and order of importance. The writer can use one or combination of these patterns to organise supporting details.

1. Chronological order : Chronological order is order by time. Supporting details are organised with order of their occurrence in time, from the first to the last event. Chronological order is often used in process and narrative essays. It presents events over a period of time. Words indicating time order are usually stated in the thesis statement.

Chronological essays often involve time phrases or clauses to present sequence of events. It is possible for the writer to start from the beginning and organise a series of events in a straightforward way. Moreover, the writer can use a flashback technique to state the events that took place earlier while giving an insight on a present event.

2. Spatial Order : Spatial order is order relating to space or position of things. The best way to arrange a description essay is spatially. It is helpful for organising ideas to describe a place or a scene: left to right, top to bottom, inside out, the most important part to the least.

3. Order of Importance : Order of importance presents details according to their importance. It is proposed that this kind should start with the least important and move to the most important idea. By writing this way, the writer can make a strong closing which is relevant when the purpose is to convince the reader.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

Conclusion is the final paragraph that briefly summarises the main points in the essay or gives a prediction, solution or recommendation. It concludes the topic and should give the final impression, influence the reader's reaction to the essay and also leave the sense of closure.

Reid (1994) and Brandon (2005) propose that the writer should avoid too long summary if the essay is short and should avoid new idea since the reader will expect explanation and also avoid apology about the quality of the essay.

Conclusion can be done in one of the following ways:

1. Summarising main points : Writers should always find a way to recall and remind their readers with the most important ideas in the essay. Readers will appreciate a summary especially in long essays when this technique plays an effective role. Summarising the sentences in the introduction as they may lack the strength to refocus the readers is not enough. Writers need to be original and powerful in restating the same ideas.
2. Making a solution : One of the available conclusions writers can use is offering a solution to a problem raised in the essay. However, writers should get rid of making absolute claims such as “This proves that...” since extreme claims are hard to prove.
3. Making a restatement : The thesis can be restated in different words in the concluding paragraph. Marking its importance is a basic objective. Restatement is effective as it reinforces all the major points at the end. It is useful in essays of which the purpose is to prove a certain point.
4. Making a recommendation : Making a recommendation is psychologically significant for a persuasive piece of writing. After convincing the reader, the writer can make a certain recommendation.
5. Making a prediction : Making a prediction is a strategy to conclude an essay a step further than a summary. It does not summarise the main points in the essay but it leads the writer to make predictions regarding the points presented.
6. Using a quotation : Quotations by famous people that are appropriate for the essay can sum up and add interest to the conclusion.

In order to relate all ideas produced and make them flow smoothly, coherence, in various forms, should be used in an essay.

### **Coherence**

Coherence is the relationship between paragraphs by connecting ideas presented in the essay together. A good essay must be coherent. This feature makes the ideas flow continuously. Wyrick (2002:66), Brandon (2005:54-55) present several ways to realise coherence :

- Repetition of key ideas : the reader will recall the main idea of the essay through repetition of words or phrases. Repeated words throughout the essay will relate one paragraph to another and this will make it easy for the reader to follow the main points.
- Pronoun reference: Pronouns provide connecting link in the essay. They drive the reader back to the former thought before leading to the new one.
- Transitional expressions : Transitional expressions or cohesive devices are words or phrases that tie sentences and paragraphs together. The writer can use these transitional expressions to change and enrich sentence structure. Common transitions used can be categorised according to the purpose.

To add: again, also, and, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, too

To show sequence: first, in the first place, further, next, second, then, last, finally

To compare: in the same way, likewise, similarly

To contrast: although, but, conversely, despite, even though, however, in contrast, nevertheless, on the contrary, though, yet, whereas

To give examples: for example, for instance, that is, such as

To indicate place: above, below, elsewhere, further on, here, near, next to, on the other side, opposite to, there, to the left, to the right

To indicate time: after, afterward, as long as, as soon as, before, immediately, since, soon, until, now, shortly To show cause and effect: accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, hence, otherwise, since, therefore, thus

To summarise: in brief, in conclusion, in short, in summary, therefore, to summarise

## **Kinds of Essays**

### **1 Description**

A descriptive essay help to describe things, places, events, people or settings. It depends mainly on giving specific and accurate information by using words linked to five senses. The reader should see, hear, smell, taste and feel through words used in the essay. The writer can use descriptive words to design the picture in the reader's mind as well as to affect the reader's emotion.

In order to present the verbal picture of the things described, the writer should give particular and vivid facts as well as organise them in suitable sequence to frame the image on the reader's mind. The descriptive essay is used to describe or create a vivid image of a person, place or thing in the reader mind to enable him sharing the writer's sensory experience. For a perfect description, Terwilliger (2011: 1) in her book structuring a Descriptive Essay mentioned the following techniques:

a. Select a subject: When the student starts writing, it is extremely important to decide what he is going to describe and how it will look like and the key for a good description is observation. For example, if the learner wants to describe a place that he already knows, he should go there to take notes in order to have a much clear idea about it. b. Use descriptive words: in his description, the learners should use as much as possible of sensory and descriptive words (adjectives) rather than using just simple words (good, bad...) for example, it is better to say "The big brown dog sniffed around the red rose bushes in the front yard" than saying "The dog sniffs around". c. Organize details: The paragraphs in a descriptive essay can be structured spatially (from top to bottom or from near to far) or chronologically (time order) or from general to specific. Descriptive essays can also use other patterns of organization such as narrative or exemplification. d. Draw a logical conclusion: in writing the

conclusion, the learner may also use descriptive words, however, he has to be sure that the conclusion is logical and relevant.

## **2 Narration**

A narration essay tells a story. It should be about an event the reader would find interesting. The elements of storytelling should be included such as plot, character setting, climax and ending. It depends on concrete, sensory details that present and support the story. It is more interesting to actually recreate the incident for the reader to be engaged than to simply tell about it. Consequently, it should be detailed and evident with events stated in an organised manner. The narrative writing is considered to be the easiest type of writing since it conveys what exactly happened. It talks about real life situation and it must have a clearly defined setting, characters, plot and point of view, including an introduction, a climax and a conclusion. The purpose behind such kind of essays is to convey a message to the readers or an important lesson that the writer wants from others to learn such as the importance of respect.

## **3 Definition**

A definition essay explains what a concept means. A term can be defined by mentioning function, structure or analysis. Defining by function is to explain what something does or how something works. Defining by structure means to explain how something is organised. Defining by analysis is comparing the similarities and marking the differences from the words in the same group. In defining these terms, it is proposed that clear and basic information should be used together with facts or examples that are easy to understand.

## **4 Process**

A process essay provides the instructions on how something functions or how to do something. The writer presents steps that lead to an outcome. In some processes, the order of steps is determinant; therefore, transitions used need to be very clear in order to make the steps simple and to facilitate the understanding of each step by readers. It is important to take into consideration what the reader already knows and what he/she needs to know. All the necessary details should be involved for the reader to learn or to realise the process.

## **5 Classification**

A classification essay classify things into categories in a logical order. The first step in writing classification essay is to organise things into clear categories that do not overlap. The thesis statement includes the topic and how it is classified. Writers should regard that the ideas are grouped with the same organising manner.

Mayers (2005) presents two guidelines to ensure the categories are clear and consistent: use only one norm for organising, and create sections that allow room for everyone or everything to be classified.

## **6 Comparison and Contrast**

A comparison and contrast essay provides similarities and differences. A comparison shows similarities of different matters and a contrast shows differences of similar matters. A comparison and contrast essay is always stated together since there is no need to compare two similar things without contrasting them.

The thesis statement should name the topic to be compared and contrasted clearly. There are two methods for organising a comparison and contrast essay:

- **Item-by-item or block organisation :** In this type, one idea or one thing is totally and completely described and then, the other is similarly described. The writer presents supporting points of the first topic, then compare and contrast the same points of the second topic. Summarising the similarities and differences at the conclusion the reader will be provided by a clear picture of the two things.
- **Point-by-point organisation** The point-by-point pattern is used to compare and contrast one point about the two topics, then move to a second point, after that consider a third point. Which organisation is appropriate for an essay depends on the nature of the topic. The point-by-point organisation makes the topic with a lot of details easy to follow because it provides more detailed expansion of the topic. The item-by-item organisation is appropriate for topics with restricted details.

### **Previous Studies on Essay Writing**

Hirose and Sasaki (1994) study the relationship between Japanese students' English expository writing and elements impacting the quality of their written product. Their study presents that first language writing ability was highly correlated with second language writing ability and students' composing competence was due to the use of different good writers' strategies, writing fluency and confidence in writing.

Rinnert and Kabayashi (2001) examine perceptions of English essays among inexperienced EFL students, experienced EFL students, native English-speaking teachers, and nonnative English teachers in Japan. They find that inexperienced EFL students paid attentive more interest to content in judging and commenting on composition unlike experienced EFL students, native and nonnative English-speaking teachers are more concerned with clarity, logical connections and organisation.

Choi (2005) searches in what different ways native speakers of Korean (ESL) and native speakers of English write English argumentative essay regarding error types, textual organisation and cohesion device. The subjects consisted of 46 American students and 46 Korean students enrolled in Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. The result shows that the Korean ESL students compose shorter essays and show more errors, more textual organisation patterns and less use of cohesion devices. Both groups of students favor the three-unit organisational structure (introduction-body-conclusion). The Korean students made article errors most often. The American students made, in a lesser degree, error in preposition and article. For cohesion devices, both Korean and American students used conjunctions and logical connectives most often in their essays.

Liu (2005) investigate factors that influenced American and Chinese students' writing and examine the placement of thesis statement in argumentative essay composed by Chinese and American students. The subjects were 50 American students, 60 Chinese students writing in English and 60 Chinese students writing in Chinese. The results present that students engage in genre of writing, elements of writing, target audiences, language background and place of main idea. Both American and Chinese students used a higher percentage of the thesis at the beginning in their argumentative essays.

Kaweera (2003) considers characteristics of narrative essays written by fourth year Naresuan University students. The result shows that two major characteristics used for narrative essays were characteristic of the different use of narrative factors mainly orientation, complication, resolution, and evaluation as well as characteristic of the number of sentences occurring in each factor.

Phuwichit (2003) examines characteristics of argumentative patterns written by fourth year English major students at Naresuan University. The results state that there were 22 out of 43 essays in which the students use all three stages of argumentative pattern particularly thesis, argument and conclusion. Most of the students of the high-rated essays write their argument with three stages whereas the low-rated essays students composed their argument with poor organisation.

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