What is an essay?

• An essay is a piece of writing that **analyses** and **evaluates** a topic or issue.

• The purpose of an essay is to give your **academic opinion** on a particular matter.

• However, there are important differences between an **academic opinion** and a **personal opinion**. What do you think the difference is?

• Academic writing style is important
Stages of writing

Writing an essay is a process. These are some suggested steps to follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Read the question and understand what you are required to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Think about the subject, the purpose and the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Brainstorm what you know/different ideas about the topic. Write this down in some way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Go to the library and find relevant books or journal articles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Read and make notes on these books and articles, making sure you record full details of the materials you use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Plan the organisation of your essay/assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Type or write your first draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Discuss your first draft informally with friends, other members of your class and your tutor if possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Revise your first draft, bearing in mind any comments that were made in your discussions to produce a second draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Repeat any previous steps to improve your draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Proofread your final draft to check for any mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Hand in the final essay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpreting the question

• Make sure you understand any question words/phrases, eg.:
  • Critically examine...
  • Assess the merits...
  • Discuss...

• Identify and ensure you understand any key words

• Make sure you know exactly what you are being asked to do

• This will ensure your research and writing is focused and relevant

• Remember that if you DO NOT answer the question, you may not get any marks at all!
Plan out a rough structure for your essay before you begin writing:

Introduction

• The introduction serves as a 'map' of the essay, outlining to your reader the main argument and points which you will develop in your essay.

• An introduction needs to be clear so the reader understands what your essay will be about.

• Ensure you include a thesis statement

• Your introduction should be about 10% of your word-count
Introduction

Introductions begin with general information and become more specific

Introduction to topic
Background information
Justification
Purpose
Thesis statement

General
Specific
A thesis statement...

• is one or two sentences which express the main idea of your essay
• tells the reader what your essay will be about and where the focus will be
• helps you to focus on a particular idea/topic
• is objective and argumentative (i.e. it makes an argument)
• is debateable – people can agree/disagree
An example...

Essay title:

Does Channel 4 still provide a range of programming that relate to its original core legislative requirements to be ‘innovative’ and ‘experimental’?

Possible thesis statement:

It will be argued that Channel 4 has largely abandoned its original remit of producing innovative and experimental television in favour of cheaper imports of existing, populist and more commercially viable programming.
Main body

• discuss the main points that you will cover to answer the essay question.
• develop your argument or line of reasoning
• give evidence for your thesis statement
• arrange in themed paragraphs, i.e. one topic per paragraph
• use signposting language to guide the reader
Paragraphs

The “Hamburger” Paragraph Model (A cheesy metaphor)

**the top bun** = topic sentence
Tell the focus for this paragraph.

**the meat & fillings** = supporting sentences
Add details to explain or describe. Add quotes or examples to support the main idea. Give it flavor.

**the bottom bun** = closing sentence
Finish by reinforcing your main idea and holding the supporting sentences together.
**Signposting Language**

**Order your points:**
- Firstly...
- Secondly...
- Finally...

**Give examples:**
- To illustrate...
- This can be seen in...
- To give an example...
- The evidence for X can be seen in...

**Give emphasis:**
- This supports the argument that...
- This demonstrates...
- The significance of this is...

**Explain something in other words:**
- To put it another way, ...
- In other words...
- To put this simply...

**In-text cross-referencing:**
- As previously stated ...
- To return to an earlier point...
- This connects to the previous argument...

**Move from one point to the next:**
- Having looked at X, it is important to consider Y.
- It is important to elaborate on...
- The following section will examine...
Your conclusion should...

• contain a very brief summary of your arguments/findings
• be a logical ending to what has been previously been discussed.
  • never contain any new information
• be about 10% of your word-count
• add to the overall quality and impact of the essay
Conclusion

Conclusions begin with specific information and become more general.

First sentence: brief summary of main ideas

Comment on the ideas

Limitations to essay: suggestions/predictions for future developments

Specific

General
Academic writing style

• Formal, authoritative approach
• Avoid first person
• Avoid direct questions
• Accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar is important – proofread carefully
• Use sources to justify and strengthen your arguments
• Ensure referencing conventions are followed
• Organise text in linked paragraphs
• Use double line spacing and a clear, readable font
A good essay contains a strong argument

• It begins with an arguable premise or claim
• It uses facts, evidence and different points of view
• It accurately cites and references sources
• It is logical and coherent and follows a clear structure

• You should be able to sum up your argument in a few words on a post-it note
How can you find us?

• Learning Hub office: AG12A (near the cash machine!)
• Opening hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday (we’re open during holidays!)
• Phone: 0113 2837 168
• Mobile: 07785 622972

facebook.com/learninghubatleedstrinity
twitter.com/LTLearningHub
The Learning Hub on Moodle