

Ten keys to writing the essay

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TEN KEYS TO WRITING THE ESSAY Key 1: Budget your time carefully. You have only a half hour in which to complete your work. You should use your time more or less as shown below: Reading and thinking about the topic 2-3 minutes Planning and taking notes 2-3 minutes Writing the essay 20 minutes Checking the essay 3-5 minutes Key 2: Read the question carefully. You must write on the topic exactly as it is given, so be sure that you understand it. If you write about another topic, you won't receive a score at all. If you don't completely address the topic, you will receive a lower score. Key 3: Brainstorm. Before you begin to write, spend a minute or two "brainstorming". Think about the topic and the best way to approach it. Remember: There is no "correct" answer for the writing section question. You can choose to support any position as long as you can adequately support your choice. Jot down any ideas you have while you're brainstorming. Specific examples are given to make the thesis statement seem stronger and more believable to the reader. The conclusion evaluates and summarizes the material that is in the body. It provides the reader with a sense of closure — the feeling that the essay is really finished, not that the writer simply ran out of time. Key 4: Plan your essay before you write. You don't have to write out a formal outline with Roman numerals, capital letters, and so on. However, you should make some notes. By following your notes, you can organize your essay before you write, leaving you free to concentrate on the task of writing. When making notes, don't worry about writing complete, grammatical sentences; use abbreviations if possible. The point of taking notes is to simply get your ideas down on paper as quickly as possible. Key 5: Be sure your handwriting is as clear and legible as possible. Handwriting that is hard to read may unconsciously prejudice the readers

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who are grading your essay. Be sure your handwriting is not too small or too large. The exact plan of organization you use depends on the type of topic you are given. The following patterns could be used for the two main types of topic commonly given. Of course, these are not the only patterns that could be used in writing essays, but they are effective plans for organizing your ideas.

Key 6: Follow a clear, logical organization. All essays should consist of three basic parts: an introductory paragraphs, a body that consists of two or three paragraph. You need to include all of these elements in your essay. The introduction states the main idea of the essay in one sentence called the thesis statement and may provide some background about that idea. The body develops the main idea brought up in the introduction.

TOPIC TYPE A: CONTRAST/ OPINION Introduction: Paragraph 1: Present the two sides of the issue; give a brief amount of background information. Body: Paragraph 2: Discuss the negative side of the issue; give examples. Paragraph 3: Discuss the positive side of the issue; give examples. Conclusion: Paragraph 4: Express your own opinion about the issue; give specific reasons for your decision.

TOPIC B: EXPLAIN THE IMPORTTANCE OF A DEVELOPMENT, INVENTION OR PHENOMENON. Introduction: Paragraph 1: Explain what development you have chosen to write about and why. Body: Paragraph 2: Discuss one aspect pf why this development is important; give examples. Paragraph 3: Discuss another aspect of why this development is important; give examples. Conclusion: Paragraph 4: Summarize the points made in Paragraphs 2 and 3.

Key 7: Use concrete examples and specific reasons. Whenever you make a general statement, you should support it with specific examples. Don't just say, " Computers are important to modern business. " Give specific examples of how computers can benefit businesses.

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If you state an opinion, give reasons. Don't just say, " I believe television is harmful to children. " Explain exactly why you think television hurts children.

Key 8: Use signal words to indicate transitions. Signal words can be used to join paragraph and sentence to sentence. These words make your essay clearer and easier to follow. Some of these expressions and their meanings are given below. Expressions Used to List Points, Examples, or reasons First example or reason First... The first example is ... The first reason it ... To show contrast However,... On the other hand,... Nevertheless,... To show a conclusion Therefore,... Consequently,...

To show similarity Likewise,... Similarly,...

To begin a concluding paragraph In conclusion,... In summary, ...

Examples of the Use of Signal Words I agree with the idea of stricter gun control for a number of reasons. First, statistics show that guns are not very effective in preventing crime. Second, accidents involving guns occur frequently. Finally, guns can be stolen and later used in crimes. I believe that a good salary is an important consideration when looking for a career.

However, the nature of the work is more important to me. Thus, I would not accept a job that I did not find rewarding. For me, the reasons for living in an urban area are stronger than the reasons for living in a rural community.

Therefore, I agree with those people. Additional examples or reasons

Second,... (Third, Fourth) A second (third, fourth) example is that... Another example is... Another reason is... In addition,... Furthermore,... Moreover,...

Final examples or reasons Finally,...

To give individual examples For example,.. For instance,...

To give a specific example,... X is an example of Y, ... You should also vary sentence structures. Begin some sentences with

prepositional phrases or subordinate clauses. Examples of various sentence

types Instead of... I agree with this idea for several reasons. Try... For several

reason, I agree with idea. Instead of... I support idea A even though idea B has some positive attributes. Try... Even though idea B has some positive attributes, I support idea A Who believe it is an advantage to live in a big city.

Key 9: Use a variety of sentence types. Good writing in English consists of a more or less equal balance between short, simple sentences consisting of only one clause and longer sentences containing two or more clauses. Therefore, make an effort to use sentences of various lengths.

Key 10: Check your essay for errors. Allow a few minutes to proofread the essay. However, don't make any major changes at this time. Don't cross out long sections or try to add a lot of new material. Look for obvious errors in punctuation, spelling, and capitalization as well as common grammatical mistakes: subject-verb agreement, wrong tense, incorrect use of plurals, incorrect word forms, and so on.. if you have ever taken a writing class in English, look at the corrections the teacher made on your papers to see what types of mistakes you commonly make, and look for these.