

What makes a good psychology essay?

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When writing an essay it is important to explain what the essay question is asking for. This helps when it comes to understanding what information is required from the essay. Before starting the essay the topic area that the essay question refers to must be recognised and well-understood, so researching topic areas before beginning an essay is essential. There are many modules in psychology such as cognitive psychology, individual and abnormal behaviour, biological psychology, social and development psychology and so on.

It is important to determine which of these modules the essay question is relating to. Once the essay question has been understood the next step is deciding in what information to include. The information must be valid and relevant to the question. The content of the essay could be either descriptive or analytical; a descriptive essay, for example, needs to be factual and concise describing a specific area of psychology. An analytical essay on the other hand, requires you to compare and contrast different methods or models.

A psychological essay involves specialist vocabulary, the content of the essay is written using psychological terminology in a clear and concise manner. To be able to write this way technical terms and definitions must be understood. An essay must be precise and also be able to distinguish between fact, opinion and argument. There are other factors that affect the quality of a psychology essay such as clarity and grammar. An essay must be easy to understand but yet use complex psychological terms. The point of a psychological essay is to convey relevant information in an academic manner.

It also helps to know what information gains mark, as to avoid the inclusion of any irrelevant information. Academic English must be used to ensure that the person writing the essay is not misunderstood by the essay marker, academic English is more formal than “ normal” English as it creates a sense of professionalism and confidence. Psychological essays have a generally accepted structure. They are written in continuous prose. The first section is an introduction providing the reader with background information about the topic area also includes the hypothesis or aim of the essay.

The main section or discussion provides accurate descriptions of the topic area and the theories or research related through it. Essentially the main section attempts to answer the hypothesis or the title of the essay. Any relevant statistical information would be discussed in this section but still using a formal English style. The last section is a conclusion to the essay; this contains a summary of the discussion or main section, an evaluation will also be included and any sources or references would be cited here.

Good psychological essays always have supporting data or evidence; the inclusion of these would make a reliable and precise essay. Psychological essays cite sources using a specific method where the name of the author is written with the date of the supporting publication following in brackets. The Harvard system of referencing is used in psychological essays, both direct and indirect forms of referencing can be used. I have concluded that a good psychological essay would follow the processes I have discussed.

Resource

1. (www. psy. gla. ac. uk)