

Aula 10

WRITING AN ESSAY

META

This class aims at writing an essay in English.

OBJETIVOS

At the end of this class, it is expected that the students:

Recognise the main parts of an essay;

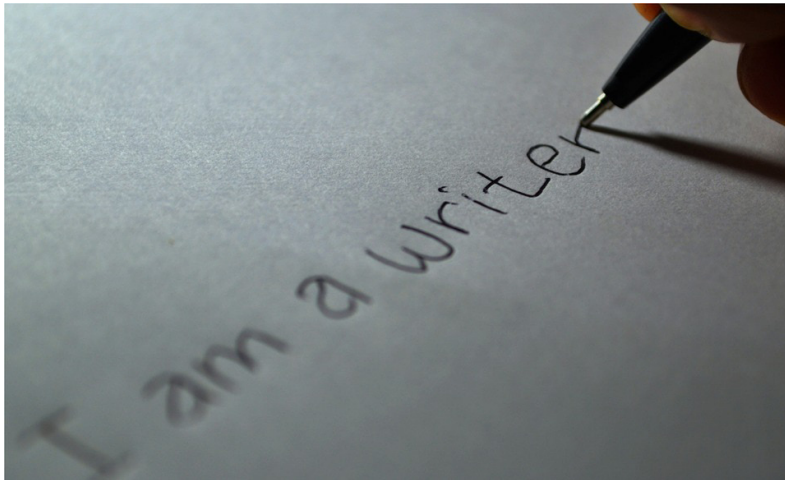
Write clear and concise ideas considering the levels of sentence detail in a paragraph.

PRÉ-REQUISITOS

Previous knowledge about paragraph structure and types of paragraphs.

Marcle Vanessa Menezes Santana

INTRODUÇÃO



Fonte: <https://theimpactnews.com>

This is the end... (?)

Welcome to last class of this semester, Class 10! After reading and practising how to write an essay – step by step, paragraph by paragraph – you are ready to write an essay non-stop.

It was a long journey, but now you are ready to embrace it. Thus, grab your pencil (or pen) and write! That's the only way of having a good writing in English (or any other language). Therefore, let's write another essay.

But let's see some general advice on the subject!

THE WRITING PROCESS



Source: <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com>

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

General Advice

Start early

As soon as you are given an essay question, begin your thinking. If you don't, you might miss useful information whilst doing other research. The television and radio often have programmes on topical issues which

could be of use - if you don't already have some ideas for your essay you could miss their usefulness. It is similar to the process when you learn a new word: because you have actually looked it up, it then seems to appear more often. This is because you become more sensitive to it - the same will happen with your essay subject.

Starting early also gives you the opportunity to draft and redraft your essay, talk to someone else about it and get it typed up and ready to hand in on time. If you do your essay the night before it is due in, it shows!

Collecting the material

It is important to collect information that is relevant. How? It is all too easy to dash to the library, collect a huge pile of books and then browse aimlessly. You might learn something, but you won't get your essay done.

The best place to start is by quickly jotting down what you already know about the question: you will probably know more than you realise. It helps to get you thinking about the topic and may also give you some ideas to follow up.

Purposeful reading

You need to adopt a strategic method: in order to read purposefully, formulate a set of questions before you begin reading. As you read, more specific questions will arise and you can look for the answers to these too. It is easy to do too much research and end up getting confused by the facts and figures. Looking for the answers to predetermined questions helps to avoid this.

Use varied sources of information

You will usually have a book list which will list the major sources of information for your subject. Use the bibliographies in these books to extend your reading. You can refer to your lecture notes, but don't rely solely on these, as they are often a general overview or could contain incorrect information if you have misunderstood something. The most productive sources of information are often subject specific journals, the "broadsheet" newspapers (e.g. The Guardian, The Independent, The Observer) and ever increasing on-line resources, such as the Internet. These publications often have specific days in the week when they focus on issues such as business, society, law and so on. They will not only give you solid up to date information on your subject, but they will give you an indication of the style of writing which is required at this level.

Keep a notebook, record cards or data base

Jot down ideas, discussions, quotations or examples as you come across them. If you don't write them down, you will inevitably forget them when it comes to writing up time. This tactic also frees your mind, because you are not trying to remember small points which can block creative thinking. As an alternative, try using small record cards which can be shuffled and sorted out as you plan and write up your essay. This can also be easily done on a computer - but a computer is harder to carry around!

Record your sources

Your notebook should also be used to write down exact details of the sources of information which you use. Failure to do this will result in wasted time relooking for information, frustration and even information being wasted because you can't use it, due to not being able to state the source.

A word on plagiarism

Doing the above will help with this. If you use source material, either as a direct quotation or as a summary in your own words, you must make a reference to it in your text and give the full details in your bibliography. You must always credit the original author, otherwise your lecturer will think you are trying to cheat or pass off someone else's idea as your own.

Understanding the question

When tutors set an essay question, they are trying to get you to show them how much you know about a particular aspect of a subject, and if appropriate develop a convincing argument. You must always answer the specific question set. Many students go wrong because they don't answer the question; they get side-tracked and focus on the wrong aspect of the subject, or just write "all they know" about the subject.

Some essay briefs are more helpful than others. Some will just give a statement followed by the word "discuss". Others give structured details which guide you step by step through what is really required. Whichever type you find yourself tackling, checking the assessment criteria can help you to see in what sort of depth you are required to write. Think of your tutor as your audience, be strategic, and find out what your tutor wants to know.

Getting down to writing

Even the most experienced writer can find a blank page daunting. The trick is to just start writing. It doesn't matter where you begin as long as

what you write ends up in the right place in the end. Just write, don't worry about spelling and style. Get your first thoughts down on paper. Once you have done this you can sort out your ideas using your initial plan.

If you compose on a computer you can "cut and paste", moving paragraphs around to their final place in the essay. If you prefer pen and paper, leave a line or two between ideas so you can physically "cut and paste". Get the scissors and sticky tape out and cut your essay up. Sitting on the floor with your work spread out around you can be useful at this stage. As long as you end up with a beginning (the introduction), a middle (the body of the essay), and an end (the conclusion), you won't go far wrong.

Your essay should follow this pattern:

An introduction should contain some comment on the topic of the essay - perhaps definitions are needed, or some explanation of what you understand by the title. This section should also state which aspects of the topic you intend to deal with and why. Remember you are not writing a book, so you need to select a few main arguments to support your answer to the question. Your introduction should consist of a guide to the essay giving the reader a clear idea of what will follow and making it clear to your tutor that you are going to answer the question set.

The body of the essay will take each of these main points and develop them with examples and illustrations, using clearly defined paragraphs. This is where you will need to think about the structure of your essay and make sure you follow a clear path through to your conclusion. This section is where most writers go wrong, but if you plan carefully you should have a direction for your essay before you start writing.

Your conclusion will summarise your main ideas. It might also be appropriate to give a firm or tentative answer to the question. Or you may have chosen a question where you need to suggest wider implications, or future trends. You could also suggest areas worthy of further consideration. It is in this section that you can introduce your own views - as long as they are based on the arguments you have developed earlier.

It can help to have some idea of the length of each section; the following is a very rough guide, NOT A REGULATION.

Introduction 7 - 8% of total length

Conclusion 12 - 15% of total length

Style

Many students worry about their writing style but remember, your words express your thoughts and if you've got a clear plan and a real grasp of the material, then you will have very little trouble writing with clarity

and coherence. It's much better to use clear straightforward language, although there is a difference between written and spoken language. Don't use obscure or complex words or phrases for the sake of it, but avoid slang and abbreviations. Generally, stick to shorter sentences, but remember to vary these with some longer ones occasionally. The main objective is to be clear and concise so that your reader can follow your argument, and is not distracted or irritated by irrelevant padding.

Source: <http://library.bcu.ac.uk>



Writing survey

1. Answer the questions.

a. What types of writing do you do in your native language at least once a month? Add to the list.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> letters | <input type="checkbox"/> essays |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lists | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> e-mail | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> diary | <input type="checkbox"/> |

b. What type of writing is the most enjoyable? What type is the least enjoyable? Why?

c. How often do you write in English? What do you write in English?

d. Will you write in English in the future? What kinds of things will you write?

e. When you write:

	yes	no
Do you write with pencil and paper?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you use a computer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you use a dictionary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you make notes before you write?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you write your text in your native language first?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you write your text more than once?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

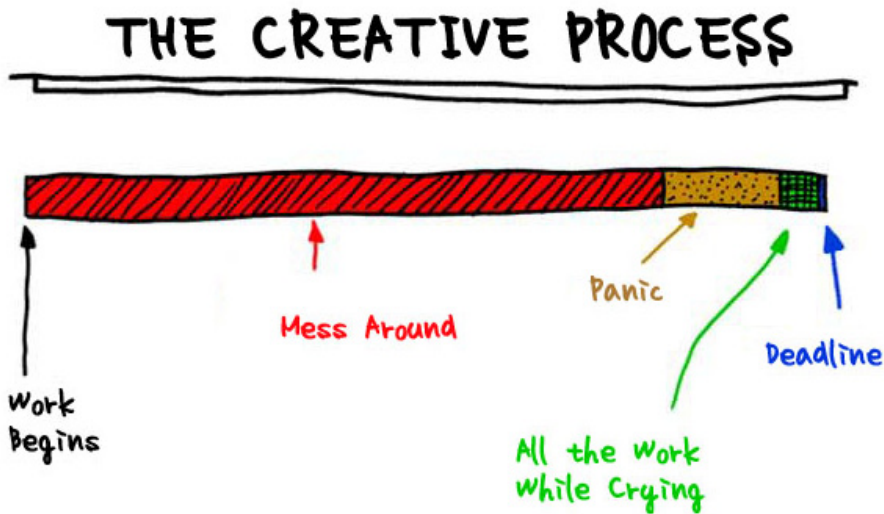
f. How easy are these things when you write in English? Circle the most appropriate number. (1 = very easy, 2 = quite easy, 3 = quite challenging, 4 = very challenging)

grammar	1	2	3	4
expressing myself	1	2	3	4
vocabulary / finding the right word	1	2	3	4
getting ideas	1	2	3	4
writing something interesting	1	2	3	4
writing something beautiful	1	2	3	4
writing something original	1	2	3	4
writing something intellectual	1	2	3	4

g. What do you hope to learn from this class?

2. Share your answers with a partner or small group.

Source: ZEMACH, Dorothy E.; RUMISEK, Lisa A. Academic Writing: from Paragraph to essay. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2005, p. 122.



Source: <http://www.carlalaureano.com>

Choose one of the following topics and write an essay:

Some people think that a person can never understand the culture of a country unless they speak the language.

Do you agree with this opinion?

Some people think that you can never become fluent in a language unless you have spent time living or working in that country.

To what extent do you agree?

Source: <http://ieltsliz.com>

WEB SEARCH

Let's learn more about writing an essay ☺

Access the website:

https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/studentlearning/undergraduate/topics/writing/essays/



SELF-EVALUATION

Did I increase my knowledge related to writing an essay?
Has my knowledge in academic writing in English improved this semester?



NEXT CLASS

Don't stop studying English and writing essays! Keep calm and write ;)

REFERENCES

OSHIMA, A.; HOGUE, A. **Writing Academic English**. 4th ed. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman, 2006.

ZEMACH, Dorothy E.; RUMISEK, Lisa A. **Academic Writing: from Paragraph to essay**. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2005.

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lc/lc_resources/academic-writing/

http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/grammar_for_academic_writing_ism.pdf