

Eight steps to a brilliant essay

An essay is the written version of your side of a discussion — perhaps a topic you are studying. It is your opportunity to write what you know and, maybe, how you know it. An essay should reflect your ideas in your own words.

1. Understand the question

- Do you know what the question means?
- What type of essay do you need to write?
 - Compare and contrast (balanced)
 - Descriptive
 - Persuasive
 - Argumentative
 - Opinion



2. Break the question down

Turn the question into smaller questions.

Then answer these smaller questions as part of the main task.

3. Do your research

You need to become an expert on the essay topic:

- Read the text
- Is there any other information you need to find out?
- Write down quotations – with their source.



4. Plan your answer



- Decide how many paragraphs you need to answer the questions from step '2' above.
- Decide on the points you need to include in each paragraph.

5. Introduction

Grab the reader's attention with:

- A quotation, or
- An exciting fact or an important piece of information.
- A definition or explanation of a word or words in the question.
- A summary of the text you are studying.
- A rhetorical question.

Get to the point and be specific. Let the reader know what the subject is.



6. 'Apex'. Each paragraph should include:

- **A point**
 - Make a brief point that answers one of your questions from step '2' above, to inform readers of the topic.
- **Evidence**
 - Select one or more quotations that back up your point, to show it is fact and not opinion.
 - After the reference, cite (in parenthesis) where you found it — author, title etc.

- **Explanation**

Now explain what your quotation means and how it backs up your point

- Make an easy to understand transition between each paragraph, using connectives:
 - "Not only...also..."
 - "Besides..."
 - "In addition to..."
 - "However..."
 - "Although..." etc.

7. Conclusion

- Recap your main ideas as a summary of what you have written
 - Give your opinion and the brief answer to the question.
 - Leave a memorable impression in the reader's mind.
 - Do not introduce new ideas in the conclusion.
- The End*
- You might want to end with:
 - An interesting thought.
 - An explanation of why the topic is an important one.
 - A comment on consequences.
 - A powerful image.
 - A thought-provoking quotation.

8. Proofread

- Read through your essay several times — forwards, then read backwards to double check for spelling mistakes (usually, errors are easier to spot when reading out of context).
- Get someone else to read it through but do not allow him or her to rewrite anything for you – ask for suggestions instead.
- If your essay is in digital format, check the spelling, punctuation and grammar manually – yourself – too. Spellcheckers are known to get it wrong; they do not detect homonym errors.
- Polish your language. Use a thesaurus from time to time.



** If you want to type your essays, use a size 11 or 12 and easy-to-read font.
Make sure you write the title at the top and put your name at the top of the essay.