

SHAPING FUTURES

The Merseyside Collaborative
Outreach Programme

ESSAY WRITING

This booklet is
designed to help
you improve and
practice your essay
writing skills





ESSAY WRITING

Today we are looking at writing essays, we will:

- Learn how to construct an essay – planning and structure
- Learn to recognise different command words
- Learn some top tips for essay writing



HOW TO PLAN AN ESSAY

What is the purpose of your essay? Your essay must always stick to a purpose- what's the point of writing it? What are you trying to achieve? An essay without purpose is likely to become unfocused and not make much sense.

Activity

Pick two essay questions from the following list and, in **ONE** sentence, sum up the purpose of the essay.

Example - Should school should start at 10am?

Answer - School should start later because it will improve the concentration and wellbeing of students.

Argue why Liverpool/Everton/other team will win the league.

Fortnite is the best game in the last 10 years, discuss.

Critically discuss the following statement "Facebook is bad for young people's self-esteem and confidence"

Explain the main themes in Riverdale.

Justify the claim that Cheerleading is a sport.

Contrast the arguments for and against school starting at 10am.



COMMAND WORDS

The wording of essay questions is very important. Each question will have a command word: this gives you a clear idea about how to answer the question. Remember, it's all about answering the question how the examiner wants it to be answered.

Activity

Try and match these command words to the correct definition

A) Contrast

Evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, or quality of something.

B) Explain

The state of being strikingly different from something else, typically something in juxtaposition or close association.

C) Describe

Show or prove to be right or reasonable.

D) Justify

Make an idea, situation or problem clear (to someone) by describing it in detail revealing relevant data or facts.

E) Assess

Give an account in words of (someone or something) including all of the relevant characteristics, qualities or events.



COMMAND WORDS

Answers!

Explain

Make an idea, situation or problem clear (to someone) by describing it in detail revealing relevant data or facts.

Describe

Give an account in words of (someone or something) including all of the relevant characteristics, qualities or events.

Assess

Evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, or quality of something.

Contrast

The state of being strikingly different from something else, typically something in juxtaposition or close association.

Justify

Show or prove to be right or reasonable.

How did you do?



Here are the correct answers. How many did you get correct out of 5? Now we have the definitions, but what does that mean for your essay? When you see one of these words in your essay question, this is what the assessor is looking for:

Command word	What assessors want
Explain	The marker wants you to demonstrate your knowledge on a subject
Describe	The marker wants you give detail and "paint a picture" of the subject
Assess	The marker wants you to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a subject
Contrast	To discuss the differences between two subjects – for example contrast two different poems but two authors.
Justify	The marker wants you to argue FOR a particular position, using evidence to back up your argument.



STRUCTURE

There is no single way to structure an essay; different structures will work better for different subjects. The most important thing is for the essay to have a structure, and you try to stick to it throughout! Here are a few examples of basic structures;

① DISCUSS

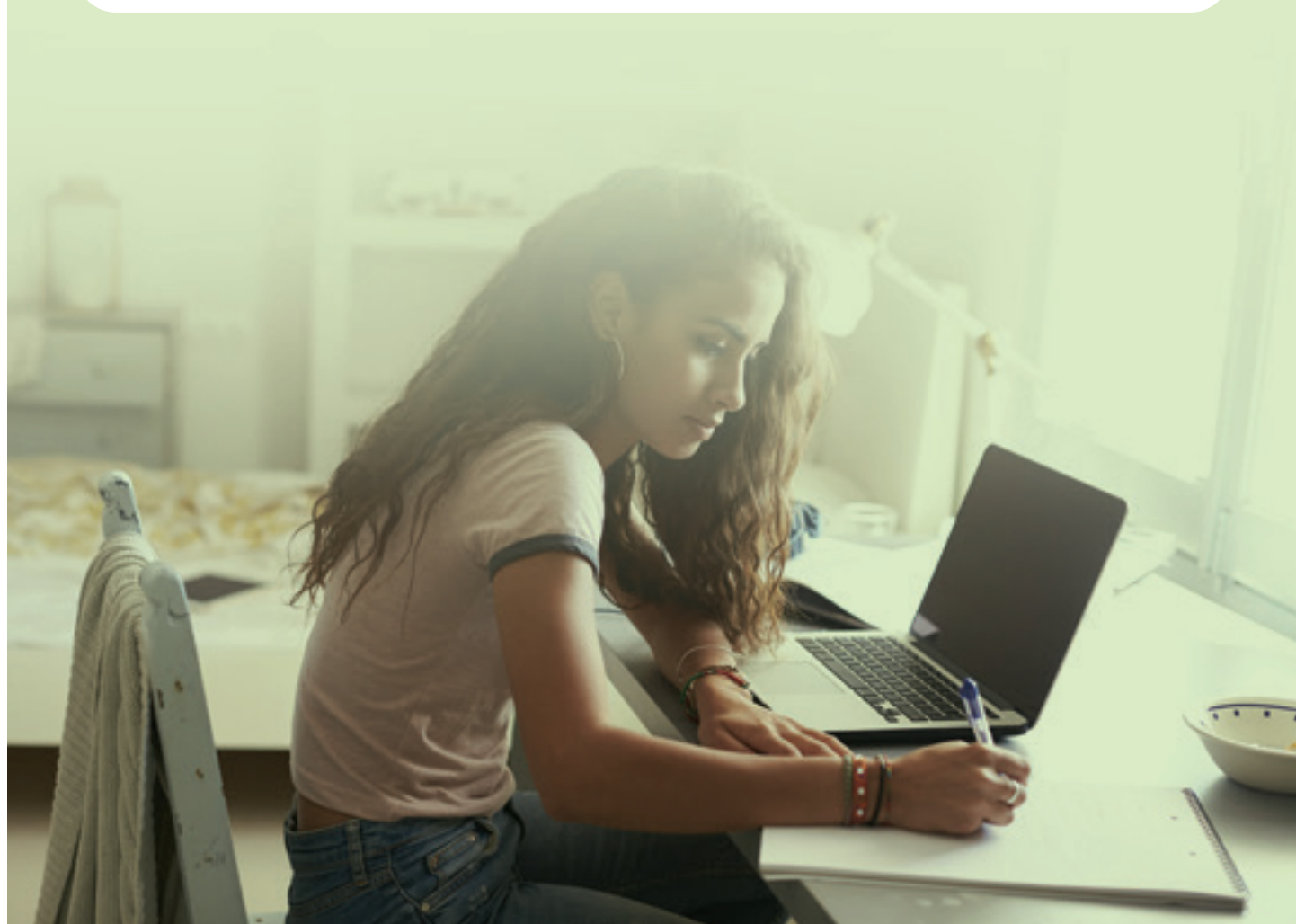
Introduction
↓
Theme one
↓
Theme two
↓
Theme three
↓
Conclusion

② CRITIQUE

Introduction
↓
Argument one
↓
Critique of argument one
↓
Argument two
↓
Critique of Argument two
↓
Conclusion

③ CRITIQUE

Introduction
↓
Argument one
↓
Argument two
↓
Critique of argument one
↓
Critique of argument two
↓
Conclusion

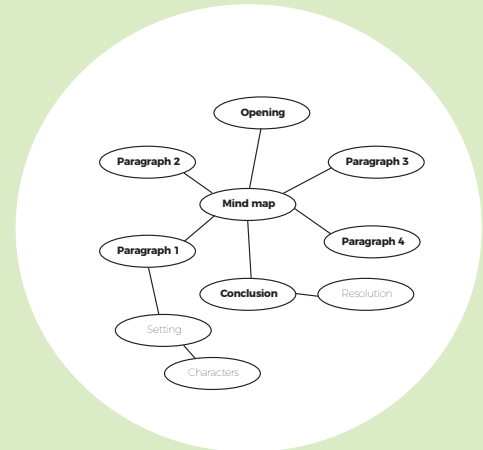


STRUCTURE

Whichever way you decide to structure your essay, just making the decision is the most important thing. Take the time to make a clear plan before you start writing it. There are multiple methods of doing this and we will briefly touch on some of them now.

Mind maps

A mind map is a visual way of planning where keywords are used to connect ideas with lines. Mind maps are a flexible way of jotting down ideas and making links. You can easily add to a mind map as you go along.

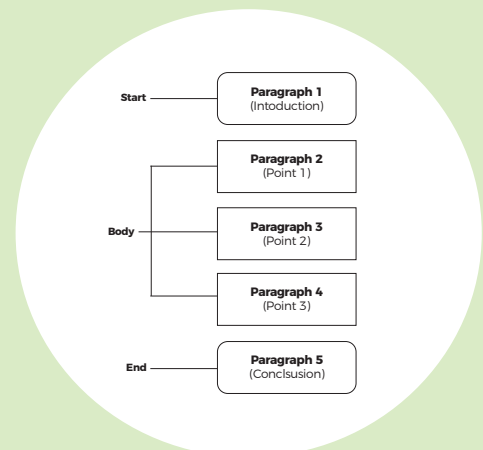


Bullet Points

When you plan with bullet points, you essentially make a list. This can be good to make sure you are not missing anything. You could list all of the sections of your essay with what you want to include.

Flow Chart

A flow chart is like a mind map that provides a visual structure for planning. It helps you to order your ideas and paragraphs into an effective structure. Some writers find a flow chart helps them focus on each important stage of the writing process.



TABLES

Evaluation tables help students to critique or make a detailed assessment of the material. An example is given below. This is taken from A Level Psychology. The study could easily be replaced by an interpretation of a historical event, a philosophical argument, a scientific experiment and so on.

Study	Strengths	Weaknesses
'Bobo Doll' study	Control group used	Potentially unethical
	Pre-screening for aggression; children sorted into groups containing similar mixtures of personalities	May have shown behaviour imitative of adults rather than simply aggressive
	Findings corroborated by greater amount of male than female violence in society	Sample lacked variation

Activity

Here are some essay titles – try and plan your essay using one of the methods outlined above.

1. Argue why Liverpool should/shouldn't be crowned champions.
2. Fortnite is the best game in the last 10 years, discuss.
3. Critically discuss the following statement – "Facebook is bad for young people's self esteem and confidence".
4. Explain the main themes in Riverdale.
5. Justify the claim that Cheerleading is a sport.
6. Contrast the arguments for and against school starting at 10am.

Top tips! Do's and Don'ts

Do – plan your argument before you start writing

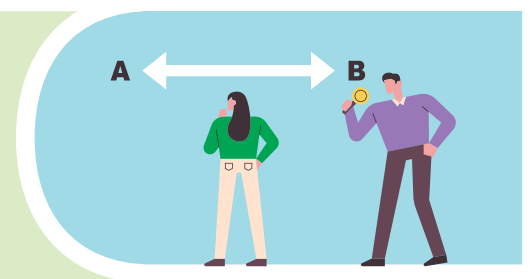
Don't – waffle to fill up space: keep it to the point

Do – answer the question you are being asked – take notice of the command words

Don't – just scribble down anything and everything you can remember about the topic

Do – write an introduction and a conclusion

Don't – think you have to write the introduction first and the conclusion last!



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