

Homework tasks:

1. From last seminar, complete activity 5 – formal / informal vocabulary

2. Write a short, 100 – 200 word essay about your own research, or a study you have participated in. Explain what the study was about, what it hoped to find, the findings or expected findings, conclusions etc.

** Try and use some examples of the passive voice and academic vocabulary that we have been working on in the seminar today.*

** Pair up and read each others essays, give feedback / corrections on any mistakes noticed.*

** Listen to some examples of students happy to present their essay to the group.*

Seminar 3: Essay Writing - The Basics

1. What does a good essay need?

** Speaking: Discuss the sentences below with a partner and try and complete the sentences with your own ideas of what is important for an academic essay:*

An academic essay aims to inform and persuade readers about an idea, based on logical arguments and structure, and the provision of evidence to support the arguments.

- An academic essay should always...
- It should never...
- It should try to present or discuss a concept or idea, and does this by...

2. Essay types

** Speaking: Discuss the questions below, giving reasons in each case.*

- a) Some people believe more women should be encouraged to study subjects such as engineering. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

- b) What do you think about technology in education? What are the pros and cons?
- c) Why do you think some children dislike school and leave as early as possible? How could this problem be reduced?
- d) What are the advantages and disadvantages of going to university? Do you think it is a good idea overall?

*** Match the essay types with the definitions below and with the sample questions a-d above:**

Theory-based essay

Contrasting viewpoints essay

Evaluation and opinion essay

Problem-solving essay

- a) suggest solutions or evaluate solutions to a problem
Some young people find school difficult and leave early without any qualifications. What causes this problem and what measures could help reduce it?
- b) present ideas about an issue, discussing possible causes and effects
Many more men than women choose to study maths and engineering. Why is this? Give reasons for your answers and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge and experience.
- c) discuss different views and reach your own conclusion
*Students are relying more and more upon technology and the internet to study. Some people see this as a benefit; others believe students are losing their ability to think for themselves.
Discuss both points of view and give your own opinion.*
- d) evaluate a statement and justify your own opinion on the topic
University education should only be offered to the most academic students, not a large majority. To what extent do you agree?

*** Complete the introductions for the above essays. Use the correct form of the words from the list below: * Complete with the class group.**

opinion outcome reason prevent circumstance

- a) There are many in which children may leave full-time education too early to benefit them; it is therefore important to take measures to attempt to influence this negative trend.
- b) There is no doubt that people have differing about who should have access to university education. According to many, it is important that the most able students attend higher education.

- c) Men tend to outnumber women in maths and engineering courses for a number of These vary from social expectations to personal preferences but the is the same: fewer females choose particular subjects to study.

3. Structure of an Essay

A) Discuss the following statements with a partner, then with the group:

An academic essay has a set structure:

You must always link the ideas within the body of the text to the introduction and conclusion:

The conclusions only role is to sum up the contents of the essay:

Essays should flow, therefore the use of headings and paragraphs is unnecessary:

A paragraph may contain only one or two sentences:

Its ok to have one long paragraph of around one page long, as long as the ideas are similar:

4. The Introduction

An essay introduction offers the reader an overview of the whole essay. It usually includes the following:

- a *statement* or 'hook' to gain the reader's interest;
- *contextualizing material* providing relevant background information;
- the *topic* and *focus* of the essay;
- the *rationale*, or reason, for writing the essay;
- an indication of the essay's *organisation*.

It may also be necessary to define any central concepts. The introduction moves from general to specific information. By the end, the reader should be clear about what the essay is going to focus on, why and how. This specific information is typically expressed in the *thesis statement*.

A) In the introduction below, identify the individual features described above:

1. In recent years the use of social networking has grown beyond recognition, bringing a new set of concerns with it. 2. Most young people now text regularly and are familiar with a variety of other platforms used for communication, such as FaceTime and instant messaging. 3. It has never been easier to keep in touch with family and friends whenever they are in the world. 4. Despite this, however, there is evidence that social isolation is rising and not decreasing. 5. I therefore propose that rather than helping people to communicate, technology has actually weakened social bonds. 6. I will attempt to outline some key reasons for this by presenting data from our own research study, and then discussing how these findings support the trend of rising isolation in those that regularly use social network platforms.

B) Focus the essay: As well as just introducing the topic, the beginning of the essay is when the writer should attempt to outline what the central issue is. What problem or question will be considered, and in what context? A question may be posed which will lead to the ideas that will be explored, or a thesis statement may be defined. Sometimes writers choose to do both, define a question, and begin to provide their perspective on answering it, early in their essay.

*** Read the following essay introduction and discuss the questions below:**

An analysis of Memorial Hall at Harvard University, and of the archival sources that describe the process of building it, suggests that the past may not be the central subject of the hall but only a medium. What message, then, does the building convey, and why are the fallen soldiers of such importance to the alumni who built it? Part of the answer, it seems, is that Memorial Hall is an educational tool, an attempt by the Harvard community of the 1870s to influence the future by shaping our memory of their times. The commemoration of those students and graduates who died for the Union during the Civil War is one aspect of this alumni message to the future, but it may not be the central idea.

- 1. Does the writer introduce the central question of the essay? If so, how?**
- 2. What does the writer believe is the significance of the building being discussed?**
- 3. How does the writer link the significance of Memorial Hall to earlier historical events?**

(Adapted from: <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/beginning-academic-essay>)

5. The Main Body

The body of an essay is where arguments and information to answer the research question and support for your thesis statement are made. The ideas, initially introduced and outlined in the introduction and

developed and explained, and evidence to support any argument or perspective is presented. The primary function of the main body of the essay is to outline, discuss and analyse the information and evidence that supports the central theme and arguments of the research paper.

So that the information stands out and is developed in a clear, logical fashion that is easy for the reader to interpret, it is important that an academic essay is structured into clear paragraphs with headings. This allows the reader to be able to quickly scan the content and to recognise easily the way the themes contained within the text are being developed.

The overall length depends slightly on the level of education being studied and the type of essay. On average, the main body should probably comprise around 60-80% of the overall text.

A) Paragraph Structure

The information contained within each paragraph of the text should be structured in a way as to help explain, present and educate the reader to the perspective and arguments of the text.

The main idea of each paragraph is introduced in the **topic sentence**, which also serves as a transition from the previous paragraph to the current one.

After the topic sentence, **evidence and ideas to support the argument are outlined in more detail**. The use of quotes, data and examples should be commonplace in this section of each paragraph.

The **closing sentence** of the paragraph sums up the relevant information contained within the paragraph and helps explain how the paragraph contributes to the overall argument or ideas of the essay.

B) Read the following paragraph and identify the topic sentence, the evidence and arguments, and the closing sentence within it:

1. Although the Braille system gained immediate popularity with the blind students at the Institute in Paris, it had to gain acceptance among the sighted before its adoption throughout France. 2. This support was necessary because sighted teachers and leaders had ultimate control over the propagation of Braille resources. 3. Many of the teachers at the Royal Institute for Blind Youth resisted learning Braille's system because they found the tactile method of reading difficult to learn (Bullock & Galst, 2009). 4. This resistance was symptomatic of the prevalent attitude that the blind population had to adapt to the sighted world rather than develop their own tools and methods. 5. Over time, however, with the increasing impetus to make social contribution possible for all, teachers began to appreciate the usefulness of Braille's system (Bullock & Galst, 2009), realizing that access to reading could help improve the productivity and integration of people with vision loss. 6. It took approximately 30 years, but the French government eventually approved the Braille system, and it was established throughout the country (Bullock & Galst, 2009).

(Adapted from: <https://www.scribbr.com/category/academic-essay/>)

6. Conclusion

The conclusion is the final paragraph or paragraphs of the text and it should take up to around 10-15% of the essay.

Its focus should be on *summarising and connecting the arguments* contained within the text.

It should also *discuss the relevance of the topic and arguments* within the context of the known information on the subject, and *suggest ideas for future research or discussion*.

A) Read the features of a conclusion below. Not all of them appear in the conclusion of all essays:

- A reference to the research
- Summary and reference to the title
- A statement of the limitations of the research
- Recommendations for the future
- A reference to the findings and relevance of the research

B) Identify these features in the conclusion below:

This discussion has shown that both social and emotional intelligence play crucial roles within the workforce, and social and workplace structure of a typical medical environment. We have considered all the available research, but due to time limitations, it has not been possible to cover all of the latest research, as this is a dynamic field of interest within the current academic arena. What is clear, however, is that these types of intelligence can improve job-seekers' chances in the job market and even the potential to enhance their career progression within the different medical and para-medical fields. Training in these types of intelligence should be offered not just on medical courses, but even as early as secondary school with greater allocation of educational investment to this area. Further research should focus on the specific subgroups of intelligence in more detail and in other occupational areas, in order to define their true importance.

(adapted from Dimond-Bayir, S. (2014). *Writing for IELTS*. Macmillan)

Homework Tasks:

1. Complete the homework task from the last seminar if you haven't already.
2. Write an introduction to an essay on this topic (150 – 200 words):

Some people believe that university education should only be offered to those who can pay for their own courses and the government should not be expected to fund higher education. To what extent do you agree?

* We will listen to some examples of these next seminar.