# Unit 10   Essay Writing: The Basics

## I.        What does a good essay need?
*Complete the gaps with suitable words.*
An academic essay aims to persuade readers of an idea based on evidence.

- An academic essay should answer ………………..
- It should have ………………….
- It should try to present or discuss something: develop a thesis via ………………

## II.       Essay types
### 1.  Answer the questions, 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?

### 2.  Match the type of essay below with a definition and sample question a-d.

**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?*

*3. The box below contains key words from the previous exercise. Complete the table by putting nouns from the box in the correct category.*

*advantage    attitude    disagreement    drawback    effect    methods    point of view*

*procedures    reasons    roots    steps    pitfalls*

| measures | opinion | benefit | causes |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

*4.  Match the word categories above with the essay types. There may be more than one possible answer.*

*5.  Complete the introductions for essays. Use the correct form of words from the table in 4. There may be more than one possible answer.*
   a)  There are many ………………. why some children leave full-time education too early to benefit them; it is therefore important to take ………………. to prevent this damaging behaviour.
   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 go.
   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.

## III.    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*.

*In the introduction below, identify individual features described above.*

In the recent years the use of social networking has grown beyond recognition, bringing a new set of concerns with it. Most young people now text regularly and are familiar with a variety of other platforms used for communication, such as FaceTime and instant messaging. It has never been easier to keep in touch with family and friends whenever they are in the world. Despite this, however, there is evidence that social isolation is rising and not decreasing. I therefore agree that rather than helping people to communicate, technology has actually weakened social bonds. I will attempt to outline some key reasons for this.

*Write an introduction to an essay on this topic:*

*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?*

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

## IV.     Main body

### 1.   Cohesion

Cohesive language includes the words or phrases used to connect written ideas or information together to form a text. Authors first introduce an idea or subject, and then add more information about it. This means they need to refer to the idea again, using reference words like *this work, their* or *it*.

**Look at the text and decide exactly which part each word/ phrase in bold refers to.**

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the essential argument of heredity versus environment emerged. **These terms** are often known as ´nature´ and ´nurture´ **respectively**. Essentially the arguments are concerned with the extent to which intelligence is inherited through the genes a person is born with (heredity, or nature), or formed through a person´s life and **their** surroundings (environment, or nurture).

**Complete the paragraph using the words/ phrases below. There are two words you do not need.**

*it     respectively     that (2)     the     these     these terms     these theories     this     who*

Intelligence is a concept ………………. has interested thinkers for many hundreds of years. ……………….. has been seen as either mainly hereditary or environmental. ……………….. refer to ´nature´ and ´nurture´ …………… . Based on ……………… two perspectives, differing theories emerged. ……………... remain controversial to this day. The idea …………. intelligence is genetically determined has been strongly criticised, while ………………. assumption that intelligence can be accurately measured by IQ tests is also widely disputed.

## 2. Transitions

**Task A) What are these transitions used for?**

a) therefore, thus, consequently, as a consequence, as a result
b) in addition, also, finally, moreover, furthermore
c) however, on the other hand, whereas, while, yet, but, despite, in spite of, although, nevertheless
d) first, second, next / firstly, secondly, thirdly, finally / initially, subsequently, ultimately
e) in this case, for example, for instance, to illustrate, to demonstrate
f) in brief, in conclusion, finally, in summary, to sum up, that is to say, all in all, as a result, in short

1. To introduce an opposite idea or show exception
2. To introduce an example
3. To indicate a result / cause of something
4. To logically divide an idea
5. To summarise and conclude
6. To introduce an additional idea

(http://academichelp.net/general-writing-tips/essentials/common-transitions.html)

**Task B) Choose suitable transitions for the following sentences:**

a) Knowledge can be acquired from books, *despite / whereas / also* skills must be learned through practice.
b) It´s a difficult race. *Despite / On the other hand / Nevertheless,* about a thousand runners participate every year.
c) Doctors are short of time to listen and *although / while/ consequently* tend to prescribe drugs whenever they can.
d) This is one possible solution to the problem. *Despite / However, / For instance,* there are others.
e) We were unable to get the funding and *therefore/ nevertheless/ however* had to abandon the project.
f) Many people are successful in their jobs *despite / however/ although* the fact that they have no university diploma.

## 3. Being formal

Academic language should always be clear and logical, but it should also conform to its own genre or style. Academic English, particularly when written, is usually described as ´formal´ language. The formality of academic writing is characterised by the following:

**A) An impersonal** rather than a personal **style**, including the use of structures that begin with *it* and *there*, rather than personal pronouns *I*, *we* and *you*.

**Complete each sentence with *it* or *there*.**

1. …………… has been argued by educationalists that a greater number of male teachers at primary school level might improve the performance of young boys in the classroom.
2. …………….. was some evidence in the survey that British people still feel closer links with the USA than with their fellow citizens in the EU.
3. …………….. needs to be a proper exploration of the causes of the riots.
4. …………… may be preferable for the newspaper industry to regulate itself.

B) A tendency to base structures around **nouns** rather than verbs (**nominalisation**).

Example: If countries continue to **burn** the forests, they are likely to **destroy** much of the local flora and fauna. → The continued **burning** of the forests will lead to the **destruction** of the local flora and fauna.

**Transform the sentences using nominalisation.**
1. The presenter questioned whether some of the research was *relevant*. → The ……………………. of the research was questioned by the presenter.
2. The country´s infrastructure has been *improving* over the last two years. → There has been an ………………… in the country´s infrastructure over the last two years.
3. The performance of men and women was very *similar* in this respect. → There are numerous …………….. in the performance of men and women in this respect.

C) The use of **formal vocabulary**

**Math each phrase with one of the more formal words below.**
*distribute      advisable      occupation      deteriorate      unacceptable*
*negotiations      in addition      therefore      further      due to      submit*
*resign*

also      give out      hand in      job      quit      get worse      so
wrong/ very bad      talks      a good idea      more      because of

**V.      Conclusion**
1. **Read the features of a conclusion below. Not all of them appear in the conclusion of all essays.**
- A reference to research
- Summary and reference to the title
- A statement of limitations
- Recommendations for the future
- A reference to findings

**Identify these features in the conclusion below.**

The discussion has shown that social and emotional , including intrapersonal, intelligence have a crucial part in the medical environment. We have considered the role of research, but it has not been possible to cover all of the latest research. What is clear, however, is that the three types of intelligence can improve job-seekers´ chances in the job market. 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.