

English 146 STRATEGIES FOR IN-CLASS ESSAY WRITING

1. **Put the main idea first:** Begin the essay with a very short paragraph consisting of an introductory statement followed by the thesis statement, or consisting of the thesis statement by itself. In in-class writing, this has two advantages:
 - a. It provides a clear road map for readers: they know what you plan to say right at the outset so that they can examine the essay development in light of the opening, thus avoiding false assumptions
 - b. It allows you to demonstrate your knowledge before you run out of time. An essay in which the main point comes in the last paragraph would be rather disappointing if you ran out of time before setting down that crucial final synthesis of the topic.
2. **Stick to the point:** do not try to impress reader with everything you know about the Subject; do not argue back and forth every minor argument about the topic. Again, time management is a strong reason for this advice. Digressions can waste time and space that are more important to spend on fully addressing the topic itself. Assume your reader knows the stories. Stick to details that develop your thesis.
3. **Do not write long thesis or concluding paragraphs:** keep them to 1 or 2 sentences. Most marks are usually awarded for direct thesis opening and good middle development. Body paragraphs should be well-developed at least 6 to 9 sentences each, and they should open with an effective topic sentence that invites answering the questions, “how?” or “why?” (not just “what?”)
4. **Set down the final copy as soon as possible:** If you wish, make a brief point outline with main point and a phrase for each paragraph. This part of the time should be no more than 5 to 10 minutes. Do not attempt elaborate outlines or complete rough drafts of an essay. You will inevitably run out of time that could be more valuably used for proofreading.
5. **Make sure you set aside at least 5 minutes to go over your work and check for errors.**

Some rules of academic style:

*a play title is underlined when handwritten: Doc

*avoid first-person singular (I/me), and second person (you); choose we/us for readers or the readers/they; or the reader/he or she.

*use present tense for all references to literature. Do not write “Ev tended to neglect his family” but Ev tends to neglect his family.”

*avoid all contractions and abbreviations such as don’t it’s & etc.

*avoid colloquial and slang terms such as mom, dad, mom, kids, guys, a lot.

*avoid cliches: when it comes to, in this day and age

*write full sentences: never use headings, or point form, or sentence fragments.