



# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

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**English-1 (Basic English)**  
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**Writing Essays**

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## WRITING ESSAYS



Hello, welcome to this the next session of writing, as part of this course in English. At all schools, all colleges, all universities writing an essay is an essential part of English language teaching curriculum. So, Essay writing is an essential part of an English language curriculum anywhere. It is this test of language that is considered to be the ultimate test. You have to give evidence of smallest, minutest to biggest, to greatest the most difficult to learn aspects of the language any language.

Essay tests your entire proficiency in the language minus perhaps your ability to speak it checks otherwise all other kinds of preferences. That is why essay writing is so popular in school and colleges in real life, even in real life. Not everyone is a poet or novelist or a short story writer. They are lots of people who write essays, features. They are very popular with newspaper reading public and for others as well if you are in an academic career, if you are an engineer, or a doctor, a project manager. Then you know you have to learn how to write essays.

Long stretches upon 1, 2, or 3 words. Your all kinds of things under test here. You can use a variety of sentences, a variety of words. You can show that you know punctuation, spelling, grammar, vocabulary. More important than all this, here is a test of your knowledge of the word not just of the language. And whether you can arrange them in hierarchy going from young to old, or old to young, or new to old, old to new or more importantly from important to unimportant. That is why writing essays has been so popular, and testing essays have also been so popular. Let us see how good essays can be written. Next.

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## ESSAY WRITING

- An essay is an important form of writing in any language.
- Grammatically correct language, good writing skill, knowledge of spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and other conventions of writing are all important.

An essay obviously is an important form of writing in any language. Some ordinary things are very important even to essay writing. But many features of the language are not important for essay writing. But these things are all the rules of grammar plus all the rules that governed your knowledge of spelling skill vocabulary punctuation and other convention of writing are all important. Is not that they are less important here than they were in other forms. They continue to be important. But there is another thing now which has also come as important. Go to the next.

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- Contents for an essay can come mainly from general knowledge, they can be supplemented from other sources, at the internet, and with experts.
- A good essay needs planning.
- A good essay reads well if it has good examples, has evidence and arguments based upon good ideas.



That is the contents. What do you write and how much do you write? Do you have an argument in support? Do you have examples and data and evidence in support, or is it just your prejudice? So, how do you gather contents for a good essay? Newspaper writers do, newspaper artist do, newspaper reporters do, they gather all the relevant knowledge then they share it with their partners.

So, the contents of an essay constitute its most important part assuming that you make no mistakes in grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling. It is important that you must also be good at contents. You know the subject. You are going to write; you may not be an expert, but you have a reasonably good knowledge of the given topic using the given language. So, knowledge is important. Content is important; then the second important thing in an essay is the need for planning.

Since you are going to write about 250 words, it is therefore important that you should know what to mention first, what to mention next. That link, that chain must continue. And finally, a good essay may; a good essay reads well if it has good examples. Imagine 250 pages read without examples. Has evidence and arguments based upon good ideas into the writer not only has examples, but the writer has also thought about it so that he can come up with words arguments, examples, ideas not just to enrich his essays but also to entertain us, also to keep us reading. So, a good well-written essay many people say is more enjoyable or at least as much enjoyable has plays and poems and that sort of thing. The only condition is they must be well-written. Here we are going to see how we can write a good essay.

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## QUESTION



In about 250 words, write an essay on Agriculture in India.

Synopsis: In your essay, you can include the following: its contribution to the India economy, history of agriculture in India, unique features of Indian agriculture – its present problems and privileges, - its future.



So, for instance, in this case, the author is asked to write an essay in about 250 words. So, in about 250 words, write an essay on Indian Agriculture. The composition could not be the task could not be simpler. It does not say do this and then do that. Imagine your crop has dehydrated or has been washed away in floods. Write a letter to the collector of the district asking for compensation. The focus here is clear, but the matter is quite complex.

Where did you read it? What did you read? What did it say? All that hassle is not here. Just the synopsis. What is the synopsis? What is a synopsis? A synopsis is all the points that you may use in that essay. In your essay, you can include the following. Say for example you are writing on agriculture, what has agriculture given to Indian economy? Has it ever been profitable to be a farmer? Has it ever been enjoyable to be a farmer?

Take from the history of agriculture in India. Unique features to Indian agriculture. What are the unique features in Indian agriculture? It did not use much machine, it used animal power in lieu there off. What are its present problems and privileges? What is its future? Do you think agriculture will survive in India? These are the points we have to dwell upon. Next.

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I wonder if any many of you have seen a farmer, agricultural farm. Yes, it looks as green as this.

Next.

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## FIRST DRAFT

Just now in India farmers are in the news headlines. Suddenly they have hundreds of millions of sympathisers, because, the latter say, the government has given them the freedom to sell their produce where they would like to and this might make them vulnerable to the agents who would force them to sell at less than government fixed price. The government, therefore, they say, may continue to buy their produce through a single sale point, as has happened in recent years. The government, and other free market thinkers, say having freedom to sell where they wish to might bring them better prices. The government will also buy from them at a reasonably high price, but the farmers should have the choice to sell to whosoever gives them the better price.



Go through the entire essay. And you will see that the writer hardly makes a grammar mistake or grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. But you will also notice that the writer has not been able to take them together. As in a lot of redundancies, lots of trivialities, lots of inaccuracies. Go to the next.

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This controversy alone shows the pathetic state of agriculture in India. It is being presented as an industry that would die unless the government bought all of its stock. That is certainly not the case. Agriculture is the oldest industry in India. Ever since there has been an organized society in India, there has been agriculture. The Vedas and folklores mention agriculture. Division of castes, etc. in India is more or less based on roles and responsibilities in agriculture. Agriculture until very recently provided employment to over 80% people in India. Some were directly employed as farm workers and owners, some others provided for farming, and yet others found employment in helping store and sell farm produce to the consumers. India until recently was the biggest exporter of food grains like rice, wheat, pulses, corns, spices, fruits and fruit-based products, besides cash crops like cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, oil seeds, herbs and herbal products, fish, meat and dairy products.



Next.

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For India, agriculture was also the prime source of earning foreign exchange. It sold to the world, and its produce were valued above all else's. Foreigners came to India in search primarily of its farm produce, which was of the best quality, and which they bought here cheap and sold dear abroad. Not only its produce, they also imported farm labour from India. All the Indians in Pacific Ocean – Indian ocean islands were captured by the European colonial powers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries for agricultural produce which were grown almost entirely by farm labour imported from India.



Next.

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As a result, agriculture is no longer the thing that attracts anyone but one without a choice. All kinds of wrong policies concerning agricultural finance, use of fertilizers and pesticides, neglect of its own inherited methods in these areas, absence of facilities for marketing, neglect of traditional methods and reluctance to bring in new ones, all together have reduced agriculture from a profit generating and leading industry into a subsidy-dependent sick industry. This must change.

New policies must be introduced for liberally and generously financing agriculture, for marketing of its produce, for making it a profit generating sector, for developing local answers to needs for power, capital, seeds, fertilizers, manures, harvesting, storage and marketing. Rivers must be allowed to flow freely round the year , and not just during monsoon when they are in floods. Farmers should have no limits on how big they can be, just as there is no limit on how big a mall or a car factory can be; similarly, they ought to have the permission to grow anything and sell it anywhere they like, just as other products in other sectors are allowed to. Once again agriculture can regain its place of pride, and can enrich all associated with it. (594 words)



594 words. So, the writer is guilty of breaching the very first condition—writer this essay in about 250 words. Go next.

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## IRRELEVANT IDEAS

WHAT IS	WHAT SHOULD BE
Entire first paragraph	X
2 <sup>nd</sup> Para – 158 words for one idea, Agriculture used to be important...	Five words would be enough: Agriculture used to be important.
100 words for saying it has earned Foreign exchange for India	This point can be made in a few words.
Agriculture in Independent India – little or no data,	Should be stated with some data.
Making agriculture a popular career – hardly any example to show why new policies can succeed	
But no, or nearly no error of grammar or spelling, etc.	



## FIRST DRAFT

Just now in India farmers are in the news headlines. Suddenly they have hundreds of millions of sympathisers, because, the latter say, the government has given them the freedom to sell their produce where they would like to and this might make them vulnerable to the agents who would force them to sell at less than government fixed price. The government, therefore, they say, may continue to buy their produce through a single sale point, as has happened in recent years. The government, and other free market thinkers, say having freedom to sell where they wish to might bring them better prices. The government will also buy from them at a reasonably high price, but the farmers should have the choice to sell to whosoever gives them the better price.



The entire first paragraph is redundant. Does this say anything? Come back, let us see. Yeah. First time in Indian, the first time in India farmers are in the news. Blatantly false. They are always in the news because there are not only one or two farmers. There are lots of farmers, and they also do other things. So, it is almost inevitable that they are not caught in this value. So, the farmers have always received the tension.

Some eras, some period of time, a little more than what attention came in the way of the others. Actually, it becomes stronger you now have something to say. Similarly, look at this thing in the second paragraph as bad. Nearly 160 words for just one idea and that idea can be stated in one sentence. One simple sentence with a few words, maybe 4 or 5. What is that sentence? Agriculture used to be important.

There was a time when agriculture used to be important. That is what has been said in 150 words in the first paragraph. The second paragraph is as bad. 100 words and what are you saying, you are saying something that can be said in few words. In independent India, agriculture has had problems. Yes, does it mean we should write here out of 250 words a dissertation on those things. Not quite really. These are the products. There is hardly any data. You know the size of crops beside number of farmers. There is hardly anything there. So, with other things, other sentences like making agriculture a popular career. How can you make it a popular career? What is this popular career? What do you mean? What have they done, which is not being done now? Without those statements, this would not mean anything. Moreover, this is not relevant. There is

hardly any error of grammar inspite of that the writer is unable to get across the task with reasonable dignity. Go on.

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## VAGUE WORDS, CLICHÉ, JARGON



WHAT IS	WHAT SHOULD BE
hundreds of millions of sympathisers...	Numerous/Innumerable...
freedom to sell where they wish to might bring them better prices	freedom to sell where they wish to might bring farmers better prices...
... the pathetic state of agriculture in India	X
... is more or less based on roles and responsibilities...	is based mostly on roles ...
... a tremendous body of knowledge...	...a body of knowledge...



Look at some example. Why exaggerate? Why say hundreds of millions of sympathizers. Why cannot we simply say many or if it is more than many, numerous or innumerable? This one word will do the function of an entire paragraph. Rather than say they wasted many words, they could just say they wasted many innumerable words. They cannot be numbered. So, with here freedom to sell where they wished to might bring them better prices.

Three times there is pronoun them, they, them what long do they mean. So, if even if you have already use nouns. But if lots of words intervene between first use of the number by you. You can change it. You can say, freedom to sell where the, you can bring in nouns. Already it has been said, but 3 of 4 pronouns together can become quite confusing. Freedom to sell where they wish to can bring them.

So, they, them, they or them again can become it is better, therefore, to say freedom to sell where they wish to might bring farmers better prices. Yeah at least one, so noun can be repeated. So that vagueness is removed, writing vague, unclear sentences is the worst enemy of a good piece of writing. Expressions like the pathetic state of agriculture in India should go right away. They are thoughtless expression; they are called the all of based these are called Cliché or Jargon.

They are worn out; they have been used so many times that they do not mean anything now. What do you mean by the pathetic state of agriculture? Does it not exist? Yes, it does. It is just even now. Does is it not flourish? Yes, it is no longer flourishing. But then is this the word for that the pathetic state. These are the questions we have to ask ourselves in more or less based on roles and responsibilities.

This may be alright for your private writing. And not for your writing which you have to share with others. So, therefore, editing is provided. What you can do is take away some unnecessary words. So, for example, you only see more or less based on that means it is almost certain that it is based on reality. So, you can say is based mostly and then why say roles and responsibilities. One brings the other; responsibility assumes role and roles assume responsibility. So one who has had a role has also had responsibility.

Therefore, you did not say that. All you can say is it based mostly on these roles. Or the tremendous body of knowledge, what you mean by a tremendous body of knowledge. What is tremendous? Is it 5 square kilometres or is it one teaspoon full. All these things are vague instances of vague writing. Next, come back earlier. Yeah, now go back, next.

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... abandoning their centuries old farms and farm lands...	... abandoning their farms and farm lands...
... modernizing and developing agricultural technology, though lots of agriculture universities were opened in India. Crop insurance is nowhere visible except on paper.	... modernizing agricultural technology, though many agriculture universities were opened. Crop insurance is yet to be available.
... corruption being so endemic in government offices...	X
... agriculture is no longer the thing that attracts anyone but one without a choice...	... agriculture attracts only the unemployable.
, just as other products in other sectors are allowed to. Once again agriculture can regain its place of pride, and can enrich all associated with it	X



A similar example is here. The right-hand column tells you what ought to be, and the left-hand column tells you what ought not to be. But in all of these cases, you will find that errors have occurred not because the writer does not know English. Errors occur because writers have not applied their mind. They have written mechanically. Go next.

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## FINAL DRAFT

Agriculture is the oldest industry in India. Until recently, it provided employment to over 80% of India's population. It also brought most of India's foreign exchange. India has everything for good agriculture, soil, water, sunshine, and a culture. It grows all sorts of crops, from water intensive to no water crop as well.

But agriculture no longer has the old importance. It is not a profitable occupation any more. Plot sizes have been made uneconomical for large scale productions, no investment was made in modernizing agricultural technology. Even now crop insurance is only upon paper here. Farmers were forced to sell their produce to government, but they were treated neither respectfully nor paid fairly and promptly.

Look at the final draft. And no draft is final; you can always make improvement. You can always. But what we have trying to say this way is that this is at least acceptable. May not be the best, maybe another revision would do it better. Make it still better, but the fact remains that the writer here has worked hard and has reduced the first piece from 800 odd to 500 odd, and this is just about 200 feature odd.

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As a result agriculture, no longer attracts anyone with brains. All kinds of wrong policies concerning agricultural finance, fertilizers and pesticides, neglect of its own inherited methods in these areas, absence of facilities for marketing, all together have reduced agriculture from a profit generating industry into a subsidy-dependent industry. This must change.

New policies must be introduced for financing agriculture, for marketing of its produce, for developing new sources of power, capital, seeds, fertilizers, manures, harvesting, storage and marketing. Rivers must be allowed to flow freely. Farms should have no limits on how big they can be. Similarly, they should be allowed to grow anything and sell anywhere, just as other products in other sectors are allowed to. With some determined investment and industrial freedom, agriculture can regain its place of pride, and can enrich all. (252 Words)



Here you have contents organized in a particular manner. It is important in the economy. The kind of liability has become the kind of tools it uses. The kind of policies that have being its

undoing. And policies that make it better all thus, all that should be stated in sufficient length. Next.

In these 252 words essay, you still have you can say two words more. But the point here is that all on this particular topic the dwelt upon this topic at some length. We have spoken about its present problems, we have spoken about its past glory. We have said how it can be rescued. All that has that is there but all that is there because of planning and revision and perhaps if you look at it once again and if I also look at what we have called final draft once again, we might still make some changes. We might say oh no, this word does not fit. That word fits that is why I have been telling you for anyone who has any ambition or pretensions to writing should have a dictionary nearby, and more than a dictionary and thesaurus should have the patience to revise and rewrite. This appears to be a bit painful. Please go on.

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## ACTIVITY



Write an essay in about 250 words upon each of the following topics.

- a. Textile Industry of India
- b. Local Foods in Global Times
- c. Future of Local Languages
- d. Traditional Indian Marriage
- e. Indian Cinema
- f. Indian Sports



You have all these topics in more you can take similar kinds. You can add to the list should we have big malls or old streets. Street corner shops or what is the future of Indian dress or should we close kitchens at home. And order and all meals from outside that will save money, that will save time. The government will have better control on people's health. It helps in many ways, it does not help in many others.

As important to think as food will have been outsourced. The point here is good planning and good revision. Good planning takes time to start writing an essay but think of all the points you

would like to include. And then order them in a certain matter, and you will find that you always write very good essays. Next.

We have given you some topics; please come back to the earlier screen. These are typical, these are an indicator not exhaustive, not that there is no more to write, not that these are the only ones you must write on. This is typical you can also write on them and share your writing with us. But before you send it to us for review, it should have your best. You should have planned well; you should have executed it well, and then you should have let us, let your reviewers, let your friends, let your family who might give you comments know because somebody has said excellence lies only in constant pursuit, and this is how you go. Actually, the advantage is if you write, if you can write good essays, all your other abilities in language listening, reading, speaking improve automatically. We cannot say this about any other skills in language. So, it is important that you write good essays proceeded by good planning and a good understanding of roles and responsibilities. Actually, the good understanding of roles. Thank you very much.