

WRITING A TERM PAPER

(this could approximately be anything between 1500 to 3500 words, including references in your case—longer is okay)

<https://www.aresearchguide.com/write-a-term-paper.html>

<https://essayshark.com/blog/a-quick-start-guide-on-how-to-write-a-term-paper/>

- 1. ABSTRACT: (aim for **200** words or less: can range between 100-850 words for an academic paper) **Topic** plus **rationale** (the significance of the topic you have selected).
- 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: aim to incorporate your particular topic within a theory (examples of theories mentioned in HUL243 – theories of language origins – associated name: C.L. Barber, Hockett etc.; the Shannon-Weaver or Dell Hymes paradigms of communication; modularity theory (Fodor/Chomsky); optimality theory in phonology (Prince and Smolensky), linguistic relativism (Sapir and Whorf), the componential analytic and prototype theories (Rosch) in semantics, the correspondence, consistency and consensus theories of truth (Wittgenstein, early and late); sense and reference theories (Frege, Russell, Quine, Kripke, Burge); speech act, implicature and ordinary language logic theories in pragmatics (Austin, Searle, Grice). **400 w**
- 3. EXAMPLES FROM DATA (questionnaires, experiments, participant observations etc., preferably your own) **400 words or more**
- 4. PROBLEMS OF FIT between theory and data. Discussion of interesting cases **300 words or more**
- 5. CONCLUSIONS and the framing of questions with regard to future research. **200-300 words**
- 6. NOTES AND REFERENCES **100-200 words**

A DIFFERENT
APPROACH:
writing an
interesting and
informative essay for
the general public

1. THE SUBJECT/TITLE OF YOUR ESSAY IN LIEU OF A FORMAL ABSTRACT:

Find an **intertextual title** or **quote** or **memorable statement** for your essay – for example, **Passage to India** or **'I do what I do'**. Use **alliteration** - e.g. Babu Bluster, Punjabi Pudding. Use a **command** or **question** in your A – e.g. **Losing your Sight? Take a Look at This!** Say something **provocative**, for example: **'In Praise of Idleness'** or **'The Mind Has No Sex'** Use **quote marks** to indicate distance or scepticism – sometimes, e.g. "HERO" **Coin words**, introduce verbal pizzazz – e.g. *Technobrat*. **Repeat** short key-phrases in your text, if it helps with cadence and emphasis. Do not hesitate to **use 'local' words** like 'bakra' or 'bakwaas' if they add to your meaning – never mind if they are not Queen's Eng. You are not a Queen anyway.

2. THE FIRST PARAGRAPH: Introduce a (**preferably oblique**) **question** into your first paragraph - to be subtly answered in the rest of your essay. Remember that an essay usually has a **single theme or subject** which is meant to be intensively – and intensely - explored throughout, from an angle that must at least attempt to be *uniquely yours*, because **in this genre you take direct face-to-face responsibility for your views and opinions**. (Notice how many 'essay' columns in newspapers etc. are accompanied by photographs of the writer e.g. Shobhaa De)

3. LOGIC, STYLE, PERSONALITY: In this genre, the cloak of both fiction and of objective 'science' are cast off. You cannot use 'characters' to convey points-of-view; you cannot shelter behind academic theories. If a 'story' is told in an essay or a theory referred to it has to be to the point and convincingly related to the **theme** of your essay. In an essay, you must not only produce strong, logical arguments to support your perspective, but also to cultivate a lively, memorable style. It is this aspect of 'personal style' and 'commitment' that make a good essayist/blogger.

4. RANGE OF TOPICS: Essayists are typically expected to be able to write on a **range of subjects**. However, often these various subjects are bound together by a single passion or concern – wildlife, feminism, travel, politics, spiritualism, science etc. Such a 'stance' gives the essayist *his personality*. That is why many essayists – both classical & contemporary – choose to cultivate a distinct 'dialogic persona' in their writings (e.g. Oscar Wilde, Khuswant Singh *et al*). And this persona may differ radically from the way they 'really are' in their personal lives.

THE ESSAY/BLOG

4. **CHOICES AND PERSONA:** In a way, *all writing can be said to be about making choices* – and helping readers think about **alternative ‘ways of looking’** – but of all the forms that you can write in, the issue of choice is perhaps most pivotal in the essay. Essayists themselves may have to make ‘hard’ choices about what **persona to ‘project’** in their essays. It is because their personae convey different attitudes that essayists can have *very exclusive fan-followings*: you can, for instance, choose to be a ‘cool’ essayist – laconic and laid-back, or a purveyor of lascivious a-moral sentiments, or a balanced and reasonable commentator, or a brilliant and original but not ‘easy’ thinker. You can project the **persona** of someone who brings a fierce and burning commitment to every issue s/he tackles or one who revels in mocking ironic detachment or just pure, sweet simplicity. A ‘mixed’ tone – with permutations and combinations of the above – is also, of course, possible, even desirable. ‘Switchovers’, too – good for surprises! **Question to yourself** - but what about ‘being sincere’, usually considered such a laudable characteristic in a writer? After years of doing a column or a blog can you really separate ‘yourself’ from your persona?
5. **SUB-HEADINGS:** Supposing you are committed to a longish essay (say, over 1500 words) or one with a ‘difficult’ subject/style, then it is sometimes not a bad idea to use **essay-internal sub-headings**. Organizationally useful but should not sound too sternly academic.
6. **ANECDOTES AND TONE:** You can begin your essay with **an anecdote and/or insert little stories at various points**. This lends a friendly, **chatty tone** to your essay. But remember that this technique is often seen as detracting from the ‘seriousness’ of an essay.
7. **CONTINUITY AND VARIATION:** Check your **paragraphs** both for logical continuity and for style. If every paragraph begins with ‘The’ or ‘This’ your essay is likely to remain unread. Also, **vary your vocabulary** – that famous aid, a **thesaurus**, is probably more important to an essayist than to any other kind of writer because in this genre ‘difficult’ words may be used with greater legitimacy than in the conventionally more direct, **dil se** forms of poetry, fiction etc. At the same time, the essayist is not limited by the strict regulations of an academic paper.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

8. PROVOCATION AND PRESUASION: Finally, since the essay is, in essence, a 'thought-provoking', dialogic form, use the strategy of inviting your reader into your text. Be a **spider**. Specifically, try using the direct 'you' mode of address at times. Your goal in an essay – in the final analysis – is not necessarily to convince your reader, but to evoke '**mental unease**' in her/him. That is - get her/him to write a parallel essay in her own head in response to yours. It's at this point that you metamorphose into a truly 'successful' essayist.

On HUL 243, at least the following criteria will be used to evaluate your essay:

1. Logical continuity and argumentation, breadth and depth
2. The way in which you problematize your theme, ask your question(s)
3. Relevance of your essay to the themes of the course
4. Originality of thought and subject matter
5. The examples you use as evidence for your argument(s)
6. Your style and conviction (this is an intangible but important)