

THE ESSAY PROCESS **(Conceptualising, Developing, Drafting & Organising Ideas in Essay Form)**

Objectives

When you have finished this section, you will be able to

- analyse an essay prompt;
- integrate information from various sources into your essay;
- organise your ideas accordingly in essay form;
- and complete an essay in multi-draft form.

Resource List

- 1) APA Guideline: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch09_s1-0002.html
- 2) See the reading resource list for relevant articles

Key Concepts

- The essay prompt
- The problem-solution essay
- The Anglo-American writer-responsible writing culture
- Grammatical features of academic writing

Procedure

Before class

1. Read tutor-assigned articles in the Resource List.
2. Review the APA style (6th edition) if you need to.
3. Scan the rest of this section.

In class

Complete **Tasks A to D** in groups.

After class

Task E: Write a draft of your essay in preparation for the peer review during the first tutorial the week after Recess.

Use the grid given to help you do that. You will be asked to share your work with your tutor and your classmates.

Tasks

A. Read the Essay Prompt. Share your answers to the questions with your group.

ESSAY PROMPT

Today, social media is fast becoming ubiquitous in many countries as it transcends geographical boundaries. Social media platforms range from blogs and other social networking sites to file-sharing networks. The use of these platforms has allowed the rapid spread of news and information and the virtual meeting of like-minded individuals or special interest groups. However, social media platforms increase the risk of privacy rights infringement, hacking, harassment and circulation of false information.

For this essay, discuss a problem arising from the use of social media and its impact on individuals and/or society in a particular country. Identify existing solutions and propose possible new measures that could be implemented to address that problem. Be sure to integrate information from appropriate sources into your essay.

Your answer will be an **800-900**-word essay written for your tutor and classmates, who will read your drafts and suggest how you can improve the essay.

You are expected to support your points with information from your readings and to properly cite these inside the text and in your reference list using the APA style (6th edition).

Questions to help you analyse the essay prompt:

1. What are the problems related to the use of social media?
2. Identify one problem you would like to discuss in your essay.
3. What existing measures have been adopted to counter the problem?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing solutions?
5. What are the other potential solutions to address this problem?

B. Organise your problem-solution essay

This essay writing assignment is developed using a problem-solution organisational pattern. This pattern is a common structure in academic writing; it involves organising information in the following four parts (Hoey, 1983, in Swales & Feak, 2004).

- (a) Description of a situation
- (b) Identification of a problem
- (c) Description of a solution
- (d) Evaluation of the solution

Below is a short problem-solution text. Label each sentence a, b, c, or d according to the list above. (One of them gets repeated.) The first part has been done for you.

(a) Description of a situation

❶ For over 20 years now biologists have been alarmed that certain populations of amphibians have been declining. ❷ These declines have occurred both in areas populated by humans as well as areas seemingly undisturbed by people. ❸ However, offering clear proof of the declining numbers of amphibians has been difficult because in most cases there is no reliable data on past population sizes with which to compare recent numbers. ❹ Moreover, it is not entirely clear whether the declines are actually part of a natural fluctuation in populations arising from droughts or a scarcity of food. ❺ To address this problem biologists are changing the way that they observe amphibian populations. ❻ One good documentation method involves counting species over the course of several years and under a variety of climatic conditions. ❼ This method should yield reliable data that will help researchers understand the extent to which amphibian populations are in danger and begin to determine what can be done to stem the decline in populations.

(Swales & Feak, 2004, pp. 14-15)

How serious does the problem seem to be? How does the author evaluate the solution?
What do you think of the solution?

C. Brainstorming possible problems and corresponding solutions

Discuss with your group possible problems related to digital literacy and language proficiency. What possible solutions can you think of? Is there any evidence to support your suggestions?

| Problem | Solution(s) |
|---------|-------------|
| | |

As you research solutions to the problem, your outline will most likely undergo changes, and so expect to rewrite and allow the points you raise in your draft to evolve.

D. Using information from other sources

In substantiating your ideas, you will be integrating paraphrased information or summaries of points from your sources. Here is a review of acceptable and unacceptable writing practices that demonstrate academic integrity (Swales & Feak, 2004, p. 173). Identify the practices you must follow (☑) and those you should avoid (☒).

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| (a) | Copying a paragraph as it is from the source without any acknowledgement | |
| (b) | Copying a paragraph and making only small changes, such as replacing a few verbs or adjectives with synonyms | |
| (c) | Cutting and pasting a paragraph by using the sentences of the original but leaving one or two out, or by putting one or two sentences in a different order | |
| (d) | Composing a paragraph by taking short standard phrases from a number of sources and putting them together with some words of your own | |
| (e) | Paraphrasing a paragraph by rewriting with substantial changes in language and organisation, amount of detail, and examples | |
| (f) | Quoting (part of) a paragraph by placing it in block format with the source cited | |

Prepare your draft

At this stage of preparing your essay, you may have identified the problem you will discuss in your essay and the possible ways of mitigating or solving that problem. Read the guidelines outlined in the table below and prepare your draft for next week's peer review class.

| | |
|---|---|
| INTRODUCTION Background Information + Thesis Statement | 1. Background information/context 2. Issue/problem that will be the focus of essay 3. Definition of key terms/concept 4. THESIS: Claim essay seeks to prove and/or scope of essay (problem + solutions) |
| Identification & description of the PROBLEM | 1. Topic sentence 2. <i>BRIEFLY</i> describe problem -why is it a problem? -examples/evidence 3. Concluding sentence |
| SOLUTION ONE Description & evaluation (optional: enhancements to solution) | 1. Topic sentence 2. Explain and support one solution. -Describe ONE existing solution (WHAT? WHO? HOW?) -EVALUATE its effectiveness (evidence) -Explain what evidence shows: why effective/not effective in fixing the problem? Think about why the solution may still be a problem. - <i>If you can improve on existing solution(s)</i> , propose modifications to this solution(s). 3. Concluding sentence. |

| | |
|---|---|
| SOLUTION TWO Description & evaluation (optional: enhancements to solution) | 1. Topic sentence 2. Explain and support one solution. -Describe ONE existing solution (WHAT? WHO? HOW?) -EVALUATE its effectiveness (evidence) -Explain what evidence shows: why effective/not effective in fixing the problem? Think about why the solution may still be a problem. - <i>If you can improve on existing solution(s)</i> , propose modifications to this solution(s). 3. Concluding sentence. |
| CONCLUSION Brief reiteration of main ideas + 'so what now?' | 1. Restate problem 2. Restate solution 3. Call to action- leave readers with something to think about |

Note

This is a suggested outline only. Your tutor may have his/her own recommendations.

References

American Psychological Association. *Basics of APA style tutorial* [Online Tutorial].

Retrieved from <http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/basics/>

Swales, J.M., & Feak, C.B. (2004). *Academic writing for graduate students* (2nd ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.