

The Research Essay for English Unit 2

An SPSE (Situation-Problem-Solution-Evaluation) type of essay is a typical approach to academic questions. In your essay, you are basically identifying the topic as a problem to be solved. The actual question won't explicitly specify this approach: you will need to identify it from the context. Look at these questions:

How can we help homeless people in our community?

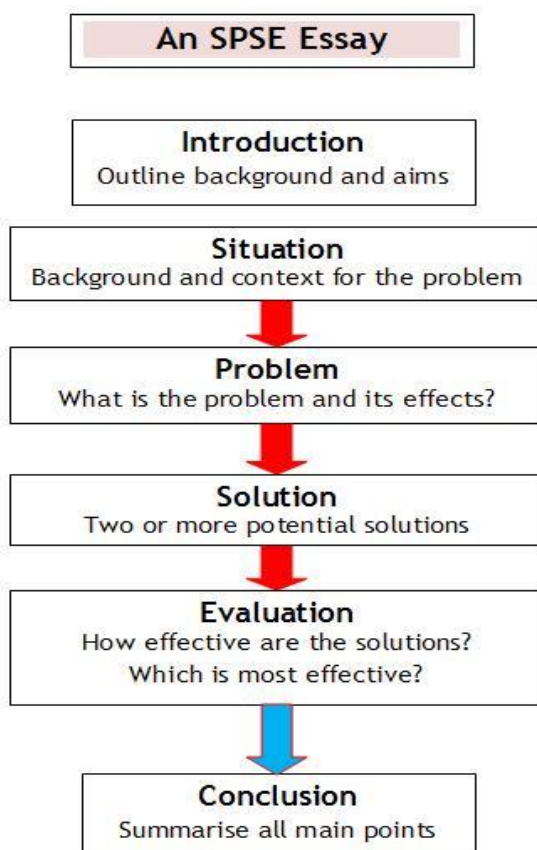
How can we be sure that students are learning what they need to know? Is a nationalized test the answer? How should testing in schools be handled?

Outline current scientific opinion on global warming. Is the situation irreversible?

The answer to these questions will involve varying amounts of argument, of showing that you are aware of differing viewpoints. But whereas in a purely argumentative essay the focus is on this argument and counter-argument, in an SPSE essay there is more focus on the situation, with many points of view, perhaps all equally valid. In many ways, a SPSE essay has much in common with an academic report:

- It has clearly defined sections and headings;
- It is information-based and presents a variety of viewpoints on a given situation;
- It lends itself to the inclusion of charts and tables;
- It generally has a specific audience in mind;
- It provides recommendations as part of the conclusion.

The SPSE essay follows the structure outlined below.



Transferability

The SPSE essay structure will help you answer different questions from different disciplines. Due to the logical nature of the structure, it is easy to plan and, as a result, easy to read. For this reason the SPSE structure is used in writing for science, humanities, business, education and many other faculties. Essentially, as the writer, your job is to describe the situation (demonstrate that this situation exists), outline the problem/s that this situation faces (generally the most common problem/s facing this situation), offer some solutions to the most pressing problem/s, and then evaluate the solutions and, in doing so, choose the solution that you believe will be most effective (this is where your argumentation skills come in). The SPSE structure is also 'framed' by an introduction and a conclusion.

Requirements

The research essay project has a few requirements that will be outlined below.

Word Limit: 1,500 (+ - 10%)

Referencing Style: APA

Sources: At least 6 different sources

Process:

- Choose a topic
- Read Resources
- Narrow Focus
- Complete Outline (5%)
- Complete Draft (10%)
- Revise Draft
- Final Version (20%)

Structure:

- Title
- Introduction
- Situation
- Problem
- Solution
- Evaluation
- Conclusion
- Reference List

Essential Skills

There are many skills from Unit 1 English that you will be using again as well as a variety of new skills that you will be introduced to.

Unit 1 Skills	Unit 2 Skills
Contributing to a discussion Cornell Note-taking Paraphrasing Basic APA Referencing Essay Writing Argumentation Peer Editing Interpreting Feedback Integrating Source Material Reading Strategies Listening Strategies Introduction to the Academic Word List Collaborative Writing Reflective Writing	Topic Selection SPSE (Situation-Problem-Solution-Evaluation) Development of Academic Vocabulary Development of Research Skills Outlining a Longer Essay Individual Writing Adding Sophistication More Advanced APA Referencing Techniques Integration of Rhetorical Patterns Reflective Practice (oral) Advanced Reading

The Process

Step 1: Choose a Topic

There are many topics available for you to choose from. However, if you have a topic in mind that is not included in the materials, you can talk with your teacher about your idea for a topic.

Choosing a topic that you are interested in is a much better idea than choosing something that you think will be easy.

Your teacher will help you with your choice; however, the decision is ultimately up to you.

Remember that the structure of your essay will help inform your decision.

Situation – What is the context of the problem?

Problem – What is the problem? (Its causes and effects)

Solution – What are the solutions to the problem?

Evaluation – How effective are the solutions? What is the best solution? Why?

Step 2: Read Resources

Before you can narrow down your topic and start developing an outline, you need to understand your topic better. There are a number of ways that you can do this; however, the best way is to start reading.

As mentioned above, there are topics and readings available on the LMS. You can also start to search for material to help you. Your teacher will provide you with a guide on how to use the library to search for relevant material and how to search the internet. You can also consider watching some documentaries or short introductory videos online to help you gain a better understanding of your topic. Also, remember to keep SPSE in mind while you read and always take Cornell Notes so that you don't have to read your material multiple times.

Step 3: Narrow your Focus

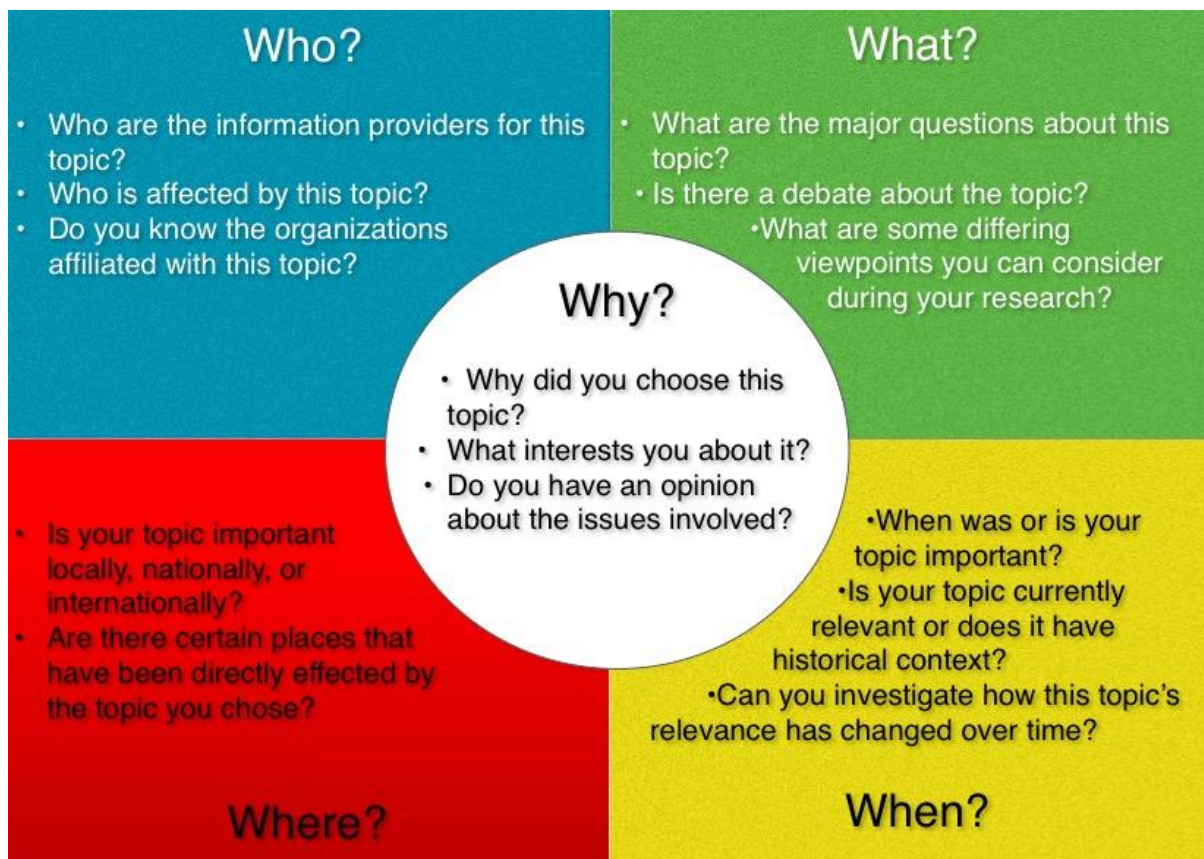
After you have chosen a topic and done some reading, it is time to narrow the focus of your essay. There are a few techniques to help you narrow the focus of your research.

Strategy 1: Be more specific

- In an effort to narrow your topic, try to think of ways of focussing on a smaller aspect of the topic, one key component of the topic, a specific time period, or perhaps a specific location.

Strategy 2: Ask journalistic type questions

- Ask yourself who, what, when, where, why and how (asking these questions will help you focus your ideas and provide you with an opportunity to see the topic from a new perspective).



Step 4: Research

- You might need to spend more time researching your topic. Just because you have researched your topic once does not mean that the research process is over.

Step 5: Complete an Outline

This part of the process is assessed: 5%. This is an opportunity for you to organise your topic, reading, and narrowed focus in one place. Your outline will very much be based around your thesis statement.

Suggested Outline

Introduction

1. The hook – *use an interesting fact, or a quote, or even a rhetorical question*
2. Connecting information – *briefly introduce the problem*
3. Thesis statement – *state the problem, why it's a problem, refer to a proposed solution for the problem*

Body Paragraph: 1 (Problem)

1. Write a topic sentence that defines the problem
 1. Describe what the problem is
2. Provide examples and reasons that show why the problem is important
 3. Show how the problem affects our lives

Body Paragraph: 2 (Solution)

1. Write a topic sentence that defines the solutions
 1. Explain these solutions
2. Provide steps/examples on how the solutions can be implemented
 3. Show how the solutions solve the problem

Body Paragraph: 3 (Evaluation)

1. Write a topic sentence that introduces the evaluation
 1. Explain your evaluation
2. Provide steps on how one solution can be implemented
 3. Show how the solution solves the problem

Conclusion

1. Restate the thesis statement
2. Summarize main points
3. Connect solution to our lives
4. Final thought

Step 6: Complete Draft

Based on your outline and feedback on your outline you will draft a version of your SPSE research essay. This part of the writing process is assessed: 10%. Your draft will be submitted to Turnitin. You will need to complete all parts of the essay:

Title

Introduction

Problem

Solution

Evaluation

Conclusion

Reference List

This is an opportunity for you to receive feedback from both your peers and your teacher.

Step 7: Revise Draft

Your teacher and peers will provide you with feedback on your draft. It is then up to you to act on this feedback.

Step 8: Final Version

The final version of your SPSE research essay will be assessed: 20%. You will submit the final version to Turnitin for assessment.

Your final essay should be an improved version of your draft. Your teacher will be looking at how well you have responded to feedback and the progress that has been made from outline to draft to final essay.