**Effective Essay Writing – Reading Material**

**Overview:**

Creating concise, informative, and compelling essays can form the basis of many careers. The ability to write a good essay is a foundational block that can unlock numerous opportunities.

**Objectives:**

This reading material is designed to help you:

* Use appropriate tools to plan your essay
* Understand the types of essays
* Choose an effective pattern to write

**Introduction:**

If your writing task is to create an essay, then the following steps will be good starting points to help you better structure your essay writing:

**Planning your essay**

**Why plan?**

Planning your essay makes it much more likely that you will end up with a coherent argument.

* It enables you to work out a logical structure and an end point for your argument before you start writing.
* It means you don't have to do this type of complex thinking at the same time as trying to find the right words to express your ideas.
* It helps you to commit yourself to sticking to the point!

Which planning method suits you?

1. Spider diagrams / visual plans - These are sometimes known as mind maps. This kind of plan gets all the main ideas down on a page with key words and phrases round the central question. You can then order your ideas by numbering the arms of the spider diagram. This method is flexible and creative, so is good to use first even if you like to order your points in linear form afterwards
2. Bullet points / linear plans - This type of plan lists the main points using bullet points or numbers. It can be a brief outline of the main point per paragraph, or a more detailed plan with sub-points and a note of the evidence to support each point

**Types of Essays**

1. Classification essay
2. Sequencing or a process analysis essay
3. Compare and Contrast essay
4. Cause and Effect essays
5. Problem and Solution essays

**What is a Classification Essay?**

     In a classification essay, a writer organizes, or sorts, things into categories.

**Three Steps to Effective Classification:**

## Sort things into useful categories.

## Make sure all the categories follow a single organizing principle.

## Give examples that fit into each category.

**Finding Categories**

     This is a key step in writing a classification essay. To classify, or sort, things in a logical way, find the categories to put them into. For example, say you need to sort the stack of papers on your desk. Before you would put them in random piles, you would decide what useful categories might be: papers that can be thrown away; papers that need immediate action; papers to read; papers to pass on to other coworkers; or papers to file.

**Thesis Statement of a Classification Essay**

The thesis statement usually includes the topic and how it is classified. Sometimes the categories are named.

(Topic)...(how is it classified)...(category) (category) (category)

Ex: *Tourists in Hawaii can enjoy three water sports: snorkeling, surfing, and sailing.*

**How to Write an Effective Classification Essay**

## Determine the categories. Be thorough; don't leave out a critical category. For example, if you say water sports of Hawaii include snorkeling and sailing, but leave out surfing, your essay would be incomplete because surfing is Hawaii's most famous water sport. On the other hand, don't include too many categories, which will blur your classification. For example, if your topic is sports shoes, and your organizing principle is activity, you wouldn't include high heels with running and bowling shoes.

## Classify by a single principle. Once you have categories, make sure that they fit into the same organizing principle. The organizing principle is how you sort the groups. Do not allow a different principle to pop up unexpectedly. For example, if your unifying principle is "tourist-oriented" water sports, don't use another unifying principle, such as "native water sports," which would have different categories: pearl diving, outrigger, or canoe racing.

## Support equally each category with examples. In general, you should write the same quantity, i.e., give the same number of examples, for each category. The most important category, usually reserved for last, might require more elaboration.

## Common Classification Transitions

* The first kind, the second kind, the third kind
* The first type, the second type, the third type
* The first group, the second group, the third group

**Remember:** In a classification essay, the writer organizes, or sorts, things into categories. There are three steps to remember when writing an effective classification essay: organize things into useful categories, use a single organizing principle, and give examples of things that fit into each category.

Below are some sample classification essay topics:

1. Attitudes toward tipping in restaurants
2. Portable music players
3. Different uses of social networking sites (such as Facebook and MySpace)
4. High school teachers or college professors
5. Ways of protecting the environment

**Sequencing or Process Analysis Essay**

**What is a Sequencing or Process Analysis Essay?**

The most common form of process analysis is in everyday use, all over the world - a recipe! Essentially, all process analysis essays are a 'recipe' in one form or another. They describe how to produce something, how something works or how something is made or works.

The systematic format is the key to success for a process analysis essay. Meandering around and not following the right order or timeline is not going to produce the desired result and not only will the process have not been described correctly, you may have lost your reader.

**How to Write an Effective** **Sequencing or Process Analysis Essay?**

1. Do not just launch into describing the method.
2. Engage your reader from the beginning. Tell them in an introduction what you are going to provide and the value of it.
3. Use the step by step format to describe your process.
4. Explain terms or unusual words as you go along. Do not make assumptions that your reader will know what you are talking about
5. Remember to break up the work into easy to follow paragraphs, bullet points and numbered lists.
6. Always finish with a conclusion. The final point in a process is not a suitable sign off. You might include what the reader should keep in mind or express an opinion. Ensure you have double checked your facts and figures if included, and also that no step of the process has been missed out.

## Common Sequence Transitions

Sequence words are especially important in narrative essays, where you must guide your reader through the events of your story. Sequence words can be used at the start of each paragraph to clearly mark out what happened first, next and so on. In addition, you can also use sequence words in informational essays that communicate historical events. They are also helpful in essays where you are writing about a book or movie and need to briefly summarize the plot. Here are some sequence/ordering words, followed by examples:

* first
* second
* third
* next
* then
* finally

EXAMPLES:

* First, my mom dropped me off at school that fateful morning.
* Then, I saw an unbelievable sight!
* Finally, the zookeepers showed up and led the baby elephant i

Sequencing - Process Analysis topics

1. How to lose weight without losing your mind
2. How to choose a major
3. How to kick a bad habit
4. How to use Twitter
5. How to make (and keep) friends on Facebook

**Comparison and Contrast**

**What is a Comparison and Contrast essay?**

A Comparison or Contrast essay is an essay in which you either compare something or contrast something. A comparison essay is an essay in which you emphasize the similarities, and a contrast essay is an essay in which you emphasize the differences. We use comparison and contrast thinking when deciding which university to attend, which car to buy, or whether to drive a car or take a bus or an airplane to a vacation site.

**How to Write an Effective Comparison and Contrast Essay?**

There are two classic organizational patterns of a comparison or contrast essay

1. Block arrangement of ideas
2. Point-by-point or alternating arrangement of ideas.

**Block Arrangement (four paragraphs**)

1. Introduction in which you state your purpose which is to discuss the differences between vacationing in the mountains or at the beach
2. Mountain A Climate B. Types of Activities C. Location
3. Beach A. Climate B. Types of Activities C. Location
4. Conclusion

A second way to organize this material is to discuss a particular point about vacationing in the mountains and then immediately to discuss the same point about vacationing at the beach. This is called point-by-point or alternating arrangement. An outline of this organization follows.

**Point-by-Point or Alternating Arrangement (five paragraphs)**

1. Introduction in which you state your purpose which is to discuss differences between vacationing in the mountains or at the beach
2. First difference between mountains and beaches is climate A. Mountains B. Beach
3. Second difference between mountains and beaches are types of activities A. Mountains B. Beach
4. Third difference between mountains and beaches is the locationA. Mountains B. Beach
5. Conclusion - Application: Block or Point-by-Point

**Comparison and Contrast Transition Words**

Comparison and contrast transition words are obviously helpful when writing a compare/contrast essay, but you can also use them to compare two different pieces of information in an expository or argumentative essay. You may also use comparison and contrast transition words to contrast two different experiences in a narrative essay or to compare two different people, places or objects in a descriptive essay. Here are some of the most common comparison words, followed by examples:

* also
* in the same way
* likewise
* similarly

EXAMPLES:

In the same way, Dr. Martin Luther King’s speech inspired a generation.

Similarly, my vacation to the beach was also peaceful and fun, just like my week at summer camp.

Here are some of the most common contrast words, followed by examples:

* but
* however
* in spite of
* on the one hand/on the other hand
* in contrast
* on the contrary
* still
* yet

EXAMPLES:

However, this delicious breakfast was not as memorable as the dinner my family shared that evening.

In contrast, my grandmother is always cracking jokes while my grandfather stays serious.

**Cause and Effect Essay**

**What is a Cause and Effect Essay?**

The simplest way to define a cause and effect essay is “one thing leads to another.” The cause is the “one thing” that results in the effect, or “another.” Frequently, a single cause can generate many effects.

Writing a cause and effect essay is about choosing a topic and building a relationship between the cause(why things happen) and the effect (what happens as a result). You must show that the issue exists, and your explanation is essential to your analysis.

Evaluate the effectiveness of your essay list by asking yourself these questions:

* What are the causes?
* What are the effects?
* Are there singular or multiple causes/effects?
* Is there a chain reaction?

Brainstorm to find a possible essay topic by identifying a variety of causes and effects. You must decide if your essay is to discuss a single topic or multiple points. Continue to ask questions until you are convinced that you have all the causes or effects related to your essay topic, and make sure that the relationships are logical and valid.

**How to Write an Effective Cause and Effect Essay**

**Organizing cause and effect essays**

After brainstorming, consider your topic choice and the best way to organize it. You can present this type of essay in one of the following three ways:

* Categorical
* Chronological
* Order of importance

Categorical presentations arrange the details by dividing the topic into parts, chronological essays arrange the information in the order in which the events happened and order of importance essay arrange the items from least to most important or vice versa.

**Key components of cause and effect essays**

The key components of a well-written cause and effect essay include the following:

* Use of language that is not negative or partial
* Use of accurate evidence that shows the cause-and-effect relationship
* Use of transitional words that assist in distinguishing similarities and differences
* Use of primary and ancillary information that shows credibility

**Framework of cause and effect essays**

The framework of a cause and effect essay includes the following sections:

* An interesting topic that focuses on analyzing and informing
* An introduction with a clear, concise and strong thesis statement
* At least three body paragraphs that include plausible, supporting evidence
* A conclusion that ties all the paragraphs together

**Structure of cause and effect essays**

The introduction of the cause and effect essay should do several things:

* Introduce the topic that illustrates the points of discussion
* State the thesis of your essay and its purpose
* Provide supporting details to strengthen your essay by providing descriptions, facts and examples
* Use transitional words and phrases to lead in to the body paragraphs

The body paragraphs focus on building a relationship between why things happen and what happens as a result. Keep the following in mind when writing your body paragraphs:

* Provide details to describe the “cause” in one body paragraph
* Provide specific “effects” in one body paragraph
* Explain the cause and effect relationship and why analysis is vital
* Maintain a list of sources that provide credence to your position, and cite sources used
* Use signal phrases to show causes (another factor, because, explain why, results from, what is the cause of, why)
* Use signal phrases to show effects (another result, as a result, consequently, one important effect, outcome, the results of)

The conclusion does not summarize the points from the body of the essay; it synthesizes the information from the body paragraphs, drawing conclusions based on the information you present. This is your last opportunity to persuade the reader to your position, so develop a convincing, logical argument.

Topic Suggestions: [Causes and Effects](http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/causeeffect.htm)

1. The effect of a parent, teacher, or friend on your life
2. The effects of cramming for an examination
3. The effects of peer pressure
4. Why some students cheat
5. The effects of growing up with a personal computer
6. The effects of poverty on an individual

**Problem and Solution Essay**

**Writing about Problems**

When you brainstorm your ideas for problem solution essays, think about (a) what the problem is (b) how you will explain it (c) and what the effect is. Your paragraph will then follow this pattern.

Here is an example of the brainstorming for this paragraph:

Problem 1: children can access potentially dangerous sites

Explanation / Example: Pornography sites

Result: Affects thought & development - negative for children & society

Problem 2: growth of online fraud and hacking

Explanation / Example: Evident from the constant news stories

Result: Criminals get sensitive information

Here they are illustrated in the paragraph, with the introductory expressions underlined:

One of the first problems of the internet is the ease with which children can access potentially dangerous sites. For example, pornography sites are easily accessible to them because they can register with a site and claim to be an adult. There is no doubt that this affects their thoughts and development, which is a negative impact for the children and for society. Another major problem is the growth of online fraud and hacking. These days, there are constant news stories about government and company websites that have been hacked, resulting in sensitive information falling into the hands of criminals.

**Writing about Solutions**

**a) The people involved**

When you come to brainstorm your solutions, think of the key 'actors' who are involved. It is usually governments and individuals in some way or another.

There may be another group specifically realted to the topic. For example, in this case it is companies and parents. If you are discussing crime it could be the police. If it is violence on TV it could be TV and film producers.

You can then brainstorm your ideas under each 'group' and organize them in the same way.

**b) Developing your solutions**

Also, try to make sure your solutions are not too simplistic. It's all too easy to make sweeping generalizations about what people can do. For example, look at this idea:

The government should introduce stricter laws.

It it common to see such statements in problem solution essays with no further explanation. Give more detail about how or why this would work. For example:

Governments should ensure that adequate legislation and controls are in place that will prevent young people from accessing dangerous sites, such as requiring more than simply confirming that you are an adult to view a site.

Some specific detail has now been given on how this solution could work.

**c) Modal Verbs**

Modal verbs can be used to make suggestions in problem solution essays. These are usually found in solutions paragraphs.

Here again is a plan for the problem solution essay for the solutions paragraph:

Solution 1: Governments

Idea: Adequate legislation and controls for young people

How: More complex website access criteria

Solution 2: Parents

Idea: Monitor children and restrict access

How: Use a computer program

Solution 3: Companies

Idea: Improve IT security systems

How: Review current systems in place

Here is the paragraph again. Note how it follows the plan and the clear topic sentence that tells the reader the essay is moving on to discuss solutions (modals verbs are underlined):

It is important that action is taken to combat these problems. Governments should ensure that adequate legislation and controls are in place that will prevent young people from accessing dangerous sites, such as requiring more than simply confirming that you are an adult to view a site. Parents also have a part to play. They need to closely monitor the activities of their children and restrict their access to certain sites, which can now be done through various computer programs. Companies must also improve their onsite IT security systems to make fraud and hacking much more difficult by undertaking thorough reviews of their current systems for weaknesses.

**Problem and Solution Transition Words**

Example transition words can help you provide evidence in Problem and Solution essays and add interesting detail in descriptive and narrative essays. There are many different kinds of example words and phrases you can use to keep your writing interesting and avoid repetition in a longer essay. Here are some of the most common example words:

* for example
* for instance
* namely
* specifically
* to illustrate

Here are some additional example words you may use in your writing, followed by examples:

* additionally
* again
* also
* and
* as well
* besides
* equally important
* further
* furthermore
* in addition

EXAMPLES:

For example, one study explained that students who participate in extracurricular activities have a higher overall homework completion rate.

Furthermore, engagement in nonacademic activities has been shown to increase confidence in children between the ages of 11 and 14.

**Conclusion Transition Words**

Conclusion words help signal to the reader that you are coming to the end of your essay. A strong conclusion paragraph will begin with a clear conclusion word or phrase that will help to sum up your overall points. Here are some of the most common conclusion words and phrases, followed by examples:

* finally
* briefly
* in conclusion
* in the end
* on the whole
* thus
* to conclude
* to summarize
* in sum
* to sum up
* in summary

EXAMPLES:

In conclusion, school uniforms can help improve students’ focus in the middle school classroom.

In sum, voting is an important part of our democracy and something we shouldn’t take for granted.