

How to Write an Essay Answer

Expectations

Candidates will be given a choice between two essay prompts and will write one essay answering the essay prompt chosen. Candidates will be given 90 minutes to write an essay that is required to be 3-5 paragraphs long. The essay should have a paragraph for the introduction, body paragraph(s), and a paragraph for the conclusion. The essay responses will be evaluated for organization, grammar, accuracy, and completeness. The essay exam will be typewritten by candidates using the current online testing system.

Read the Question

This sounds too obvious to mention but some candidates will write a prepared answer without considering whether what they are writing addresses the question asked. Read the question several times to make sure you understand what the question prompt is asking.

Analyze the Question

After reading the question, you should analyze it. Look for key words (the issue to be considered) and topic words (the subject matter) so you can ensure that you answer the question rather than provide a simple narrative of events. Once you have analyzed the question, you are ready to write your plan.

Planning (Outlining)

This is an important step in writing an essay. It is your plan that determines what approach you take to answer the question. If you have written your plan properly, you will know exactly what your answer is going to be. This is not something that should be decided while you are writing your essay! You should outline the points that you plan to make in the essay so that you organize your thoughts and don't forget any information you intend to include.

Introduction

The introduction is the most important paragraph in your essay. Without it, the reader may not understand what the point of your essay is. What are the steps to writing a good introduction? First, write one or two sentences of context directly related to your topic. Second, state what your essay intends to answer. Third, write a thesis statement in a concise sentence or two that tells the reader what the main points of your essay will be and the order those main points will be addressed.

Body (The Middle)

When you write strong, clear paragraphs, you are guiding the reader through your argument by showing them how your points fit together to support your thesis. The number of paragraphs in your essay should be determined by the number of main points you plan to develop or explain. To write strong paragraphs, try to focus each paragraph on one main point and begin a new paragraph when you are moving to a new point. A strong body paragraph will include a topic sentence that states the main idea that is then developed in the rest of the paragraph. Second, the topic sentence signals to readers how the paragraph is connected to the thesis statement. Once you've stated the main point in your topic sentence, you need to explain and provide information that supports the main idea you are trying to make in the paragraph.

Conclusion

After explaining and supporting the main ideas of the essay, you should tie them all together in conclusion. You may begin with a sentence stating what the essay sets out to explain. Following that, briefly remind the reader of the content of your essay – a short sentence summarizing the main ideas covered in the essay. However, you should not completely repeat all that was explained in the body of the essay. Finally, bring all this together in a final sentence or two, stating what your essay demonstrated or tying back to your thesis sentence.

Proofread and Edit

Before submitting your essay, read over it. Check for spelling, grammar, punctuation and syntax issues in your essay. Fix any of these issues accordingly. Read the sentences and if something doesn't make sense, consider revising wording, sentence structuring, and grammar. Remember to check for capitalization and punctuation. Remember that you should write in complete sentences. Avoid fragments, bullet points, and abbreviations (unless they are defined at some point in the essay). Writing an essay is different than writing a text!