Writing & Organizing Essays
Different cultures have different ideas about what is considered an essay. In North America, essays are

- Direct
- Stick to the topic
- Very specific (words are concrete, not vague and general)
- Clear; all concepts and terms are defined
- Neutral (no “I”), don’t use “I” or say “I will prove”, “In my opinion”, “I think”, etc. These are all unnecessary.
- Do not use rhetorical questions, exclamation points
- State clear, strong opinions
- Say things in as few words as possible
- Use examples, statistics, facts to support the main points
- Use clear transition words (first(ly), second(ly)), next, last, finally, etc.).
- Essays are evaluated according to thesis statement, organization, support, grammar, university-level sentences, format, spelling, reference system (APA, MLA, footnotes). Very important: Did student use his own words? (Plagiarism).

I. The writing process:
   - Planning — gathering ideas and thinking about a focus
   - Shaping — ways to organize your material
   - Drafting — write your ideas in sentences and paragraphs
   - Revising — evaluate and rewrite draft: adding, cutting, replacing, moving, recasting
   - Editing — check grammar, spelling, punctuation, mechanics (references, format, etc.)
   - Proofreading — read final copy for errors

II. Planning & Shaping
   - Selecting a topic — who, what, when, where, why, how?
   - Free writing & brainstorming
   - Encyclopedias, journals, books
   - Mapping & outlining
   - Grouping ideas by level of generality
     Commercialization of holidays benefits most people:
     - Enriches the economy
     - Circulation of money > profits, tax revenue
     - Jobs > in manufacturing, in retailing, in distribution, in advertising
   - Outlining (general > specific; sequence of ideas)

   - Thesis statement — most important!
   - States the subject of the essay
   - States purpose (persuasion or information)
   - Your point of view
   - Specific points (thesis statement is a mini-outline)
• Introduction (background information), thesis statement (including your points)

• At least one paragraph for each of your points

• Conclusion (repeat main points; may end with a question or suggestion for further study)

III. Types of essays: Literary, cause & effect, compare/contrast, argumentation

• Literary essay — plot (structure), character, style (language, realism vs fantasy), comment of society (criticism), the human condition (human relationships), irony

• Cause & effect — chain reactions (loss of job > loss of income > inability to pay mortgage > loss of house > necessity to rent an apartment > lack of space > family tensions)

• Useful cause & effect phrases: Cause: leads to, contributes to, results in, is the reason (for), is responsible (for); Effect: comes from, stems from, results from, is the result of, is due to, is a consequence of, consequently, therefore, thus, hence, and so, and that is why, so, For this reason, That is why, Accordingly

• Useful compare/contrast phrases: Comparison: is (almost) the same as, is (very) similar to, resembles, is like; both…and; not only…but also; neither…nor; have things in common; Similarly,…; Contrast: contrasts with…; differs from…; is (very) different from; more…than; Unlike…; Although…; Even though…; While…; In contrast…; however; on the other hand; on the contrary.

• Compare/contrast essays may be organized in two ways: all A, all B; or: point of A, point one of B; point two of A, point two of B, etc.