

## 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.