

# Writing an Essay: Guidelines

## Before Writing

- Preparation: Thoroughly research background, facts and opinions relevant to the topic.
- Understanding the question: Make sure you understand the question before you begin. Try **highlighting or underlining** important words.

## Planning

- Getting your ideas onto paper: A list of points, mind map, spider diagram or brainstorm are all effective ways of getting ideas down on paper so they are not forgotten. Not all the ideas that are thought of at this early stage will necessarily be used.
- Organisation: Organise ideas into a **logical order**.

## Writing

- Writing a first draft: Where possible, a rough copy should always be written before attempting to write a final copy to hand in. Obviously, in an exam this is not possible; therefore the planning stage is even more important. Once this draft is finished, it must be **edited** properly. This involves spelling, punctuation, grammar, structure etc. **A good way of checking is to read the essay aloud** and then have a peer or parent check. Again, in an exam, reading aloud may not be possible, but can be done silently.
- Style: This should be **formal**.
  - **Avoid contractions (didn't) and do not use slang**. Essays should not be written as though the writer is having a conversation.
  - The style should be ACE – accurate, clear, and economical. Things should not be said just for the sake of it and points need to be clear.
  - The style should be impersonal. **Avoid “I think”, “I believe”**, as the marker knows it is written by that person.
- Proofreading: Check the essay through. Again, check that what you have written makes sense. Check spelling, punctuation, grammar, structure etc. Also, check that everything written is relevant to the topic and there is no repetition.

Essay Structure: General Rules for Introduction, Paragraph and Conclusion

## Introduction

- Make the introduction general. Do not include specific points from the body of the essay.
- **Respond to the title/question**. Identify the general view the essay will take. It may be arguing one side of a particular statement and that needs to be clear from the outset.
- Introductions should be interesting, relevant and short.

## Paragraphs

- Each paragraph should contain **one main point and the evidence, discussion of this point**.
- Paragraphs should begin with a **topic sentence**. This is a sentence which indicates what the paragraph will be about and how it relates to the title/question.
- Each paragraph should have a logical link to the paragraph before. This logical link should have been identified in the planning stage.

## Conclusion

- A good conclusion will be crisp and conclusive in feel, the goal of the essay.
- **Provide a final conclusion to the title/question**, do not just restate or summarise points made earlier.
- It may be necessary to provide a personal evaluation or final opinion in a conclusion.

