

How to structure the Ideal Essay!

Writing the perfect essay can be a nightmare! No matter how well you know your subject matter, if you are unable to successfully structure your response to the posed essay question, you are at risk of scoring a big fat **F!** That's hardly a fair trade for all the hard work you have put in to learning your subject material.

But don't worry – there is no need to panic quite yet! Follow these simple steps and all your essays will always be wonderfully structured!

1- Understand the Question – What are you really being asked to do?!

One of the biggest mistakes people make when answering essay questions is **THEY DON'T ANSWER THE QUESTION**. Instead of taking some time to digest the question posed, they jump straight in and regurgitate everything they know about the subject. And whilst this approach may illustrate that you know your subject, it also suggests that you haven't read or understood the question. This then just leads to the examiner stamping your work with a **bright red F**.

So the most important thing you can do when writing an essay is really get to grips with the question posed. Establish exactly what you are being asked to do, and then constantly keep checking your answer to make sure you are **ANSWERING THE QUESTION!**

Take a look at the questions below; what words do you think are the most important? What are each of them asking you to do?

- Critically compare Austin's 'Sense and Sensibility' with Bronte's 'Northanger Abbey'.
- How important was Churchill in raising the morale of Wartime England?
- 'Darkness'. Discuss.
- Which character is the most pivotal in keeping the character's in 'Friends' bonded together?

The most important words in all of these questions are the ones that tell you what to do! These words are, '**Compare**', '**How**', '**Discuss**' and '**Which**'.

Therefore, your essay relating to the first question must **COMPARE** the works of the two authors. Simply writing about both books would not be sufficient. You would need to take specific sections of each novel and demonstrate how they are similar, and potentially, how they are different.

Similarly, in a response to the second question posed above, you would need to focus your essay on **HOW** Churchill's actions and behavior impacted on the morale of England during the war, and make an assessment as to **HOW MUCH** of an impact these actions had. This is very different to just talking about Churchill's wartime actions, or stating the morale of England at this time.

Spending time getting to grips with the essay question, and constantly reminding yourself of the question whilst you write your essay will save valuable time, and is the fastest way to improving your essay marks!

2 – Structuring your essay – Like most things in life, their needs to be a Beginning, Middle and End!

Now that you fully understand the question that your essay needs to answer, you can set about structuring the perfect response!

It doesn't matter how long or short your essay is going to be, it **MUST** contain three main sections:

- An Introduction
- The body or main argument of the essay
- A Conclusion

The Introduction should set the scene. It should provide any necessary background information, and state the intention of the essay. This is where you want to show the examiner that you understand the essay question. So state that you are going to **compare** two novels, **discuss** a concept, **explore** the impact of a character, etc.

The body of the essay should contain the main argument of the essay. Put simply, this is where you would **compare** the novels, **discuss** the concept, **explore** the impact of the character, etc.

The Conclusion should do just what it says! It should conclude your argument and pull together the main threads of your essay. You should use the conclusion of your essay to make a real impact and firmly state once again the main points of your essay. Go back to the question posed, and make sure your conclusion succinctly answers it!

3 – The content – Make sure you know what you're talking about!

And finally, the essay has to have some substance! The content is obviously pivotal to the success of your essay – you can get away with waffling through the introduction and conclusion, but the body needs to consist of some subject matter! So make sure you know the subject you are writing about! And ensure you have sufficient examples to support any opinion or statement you make.

Good Luck!