

OUMH1203
ENGLISH FOR
WRITTEN
COMMUNICATION

Assoc Prof Dr Alias Mohd Yatim

Assoc Prof Hazidi Abdul Hamid

Mohd Helmi Abdul Rahim

Teo Hui Thian

Project Directors: *Prof Dr Mansor Fadzil*
Assoc Prof Dr Widad Othman
Open University Malaysia

Module Writers: *Assoc Prof Dr Mohd Alias Yatim*
Assoc Prof Hazidi Abdul Hamid
Mohd Helmi Abdul Rahim
Teo Hui Thian

Enhanced by: *Dr Woo Tai Kwan*
Open University Malaysia

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COURSE GUIDE

COURSE GUIDE DESCRIPTION

You must read this *Course Guide* carefully from the beginning to the end. It tells you briefly what the course is about and how you can work your way through the course material. It also suggests the amount of time you may need to spend in order to complete the course successfully. Please refer to this *Course Guide* from time to time as you go through the course material as it will help to clarify important study components or points that you might miss or overlook.

INTRODUCTION

OUMH1203 English for Written Communication is one of the courses offered by the Faculty of Education and Languages at Open University Malaysia (OUM). This course is worth 3 credit hours and should be covered over eight to 15 weeks.

COURSE AUDIENCE

This course is offered to all students of OUM. It aims to impart some basic writing skills that are important to students pursuing higher education.

As an open and distance learner, you should be prepared to learn independently and able to optimise the learning modes and environment available to you. Before you begin this course, please read through the course material and understand the course requirements and how the course is conducted.

STUDY SCHEDULE

It is standard OUM practice that learners engage in 40 study hours for every credit hour. As such, for a three-credit hour course, you are expected to engage in 120 study hours. Table 1 gives an estimation of how the 120 study hours could be accumulated.

Table 1: Estimation of Accumulation of Study Hours

STUDY ACTIVITIES	STUDY HOURS
Briefly go through the course content and participate in initial discussions	3
Study the module	60
Attend 3 to 5 tutorial sessions	10
Online Participation	12
Revision	15
Assignment(s), Test(s) and Examination(s)	20
TOTAL STUDY HOURS ACCUMULATED	120

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

1. Write different types of essays with a certain degree of confidence;
2. Come up with a good research proposal; and
3. Write a properly structured and organised research paper.

COURSE SYNOPSIS

Topic 1 deals with the basic principles of written communication. It is designed to help you become more aware of the importance of written communication as well as the challenges and pitfalls.

Topic 2 introduces various models of communication. Four different models are discussed, namely the models by Claude Shannon, Roman Jakobson, Ulric Neisser and Michael Polanyi.

Topic 3 takes you through paragraph writing and show you how to plan an essay. It introduces the stages involved in essay writing, beginning from pre-

writing to the final draft. It also describes the outline for writing different types of essays. Since an essay is made up of paragraphs, this topic also includes a sub-topic on sentence connectors to help you link your ideas together.

Topic 4 delves deeper into the types of essays. It shows you how to go about writing specific essay types. It explains what a topic sentence is and how to support it with evidence. It also introduces fallacies so that you learn to avoid making weak arguments.

Topic 5 is on tackling essays. It talks about a variety of things related to essay writing, from developing paragraphs to essay structures and writing bibliography. It also touches on plagiarism and interpreting visual data.

Topic 6 is about persuasive writing, a form of writing that sets out to influence or change one's perceptions or thoughts about something. It is also known as argumentation essay which utilises logic and reason to show that a certain idea is more legitimate than another.

Topic 7 deals with report writing. Learners will learn to write good reports for academia as well as be introduced to other kinds of research reports.

Topic 8 is about writing and presenting research proposals. You will learn the various steps involved in coming up with a good research proposal, including planning and writing one.

Topic 9 deals with the steps and process of writing a good research paper. Here, learners learn about formatting and the various techniques required to write a good research paper.

Topic 10 focuses on collaborative writing. The goal in collaborative writing is to get you all to work in groups, sharing written documents, writing drafts and making amendments or changes to improve a piece of writing.

TEXT ARRANGEMENT GUIDE

Before you go through this module, it is important that you note the text arrangement. Understanding the text arrangement should help you to organise your studies more objectively and effectively. Generally, the text arrangement for each topic is as follows:

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Learning Outcomes: This section refers to what you should achieve after you have gone through a topic. As you go through each topic, you should frequently refer to the given learning outcomes. By doing this, you can continuously gauge your progress in learning the topic.

Self-Check: This component of the module is inserted at strategic locations throughout the module. It is inserted at the end of one sub-section or sometimes a few sub-sections. It usually comes in the form of a question that may require you to stop your reading and start thinking. When you come across this component, try to reflect on what you have already gone through. As you attempt to answer the question, you should be able to gauge the extent you have understood what you have just read.

Tip: This component provides you with additional pointers for the topic.

Activity: Like Self-Check, activities are also placed at various locations or junctures throughout the module. Compared to Self-Check, Activity can appear in various forms such as questions, short case studies, an observation or research. Activity may also ask for your opinion and evaluation of a given scenario. When you come across an Activity, you should try to reflect on what you have gathered from the module and apply it to real situations. You should engage yourself in higher order thinking where you might be required to analyse, synthesise and evaluate instead of just having to recall and define.

Summary: You can find this component at the end of each topic. This component helps you to recap the whole topic. By going through the summary, you should be able to gauge your knowledge retention level. Should you find points inside the summary that you do not fully understand it would be a good idea for you to revisit the details in the text.

Key Terms: This component can be found at the end of each topic. You should go through this component so as to remind yourself of important terms or jargon used throughout the topic. Should you find terms here that you are not able to explain, you should look for the terms in the text.

References: References is where a list of relevant and usually useful textbooks, journals, articles, electronic contents or sources can be found. This list can appear in a few locations such as in the Course Guide (at References section), at the end of every topic or at the back of the module. You are encouraged to read and refer to the suggested sources to get the additional information needed as well as to enhance your overall understanding of the course.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

OUMH1203 English for Written Communication is generally offered in the first semester of studies at OUM. Therefore, this course does not require you to have any prior knowledge from courses offered at OUM.

ASSESSMENT METHOD

Please refer to myLMS.

REFERENCES

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Topic 3

▶ What are Essays?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

1. Plan an essay;
2. Identify different types of essays; and
3. Develop paragraphs.

▶ INTRODUCTION

Before you can actually communicate using different forms of writing, you need to know basic writing skills. This topic will assume that you have passed the sentence construction stage and know how to write good sentences. It will focus on teaching you how to write paragraphs. The best way to acquire this skill is to demonstrate it through essay writing.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, an essay is:

A short literary composition on a single subject, usually presenting the personal view of the author.

Over time, essays have become very important in the academic world. Academic essays are used to measure how students fare in their writing performances. Essays are also used to see the students' train of thought and ability to argue out certain issues. Due to the different purposes of writing, there are many types of academic essays. Examples include the descriptive essay, narrative essay, comparative essay, and argumentative essay.

Though there are many types of essays, the basic structure of one particular essay type is very similar to another. Once you understand the basic structure, you should be able to write any type of essay required of you.

Tip:

You need to read widely to improve your writing skills. The reading-writing connection should not be ignored.

3.1 PLANNING TO WRITE ESSAYS

Writing good essays is more than just merely making sure the grammar and vocabulary used are correct. There are many writing strategies you can employ to write an essay. Some people like to write down key points as they come to mind and try to rearrange them later into something acceptable, some prefer to write straight away and think as they go along, while others may find it easier to work by coming up with some sort of visual mind map or outline to further develop their thinking.

As a beginner to essay writing, it is always good to plan out what you want to write. As they say, failing to plan is planning to fail.

The first thing to do is to make sure you understand what the question wants. Read the question carefully, identify the main issue and understand any new key terms there.

Basically there are four stages involved in essay writing:

- (i) Pre-writing
- (ii) Draft
- (iii) Editing
- (iv) Final draft/essay

3.1.1 Pre-writing Stage

Think about the essay topic, then gather information and scribble down ideas related to it, putting this down in the form of a bulleted list, mind-map, outline and so on. Use the form you are most comfortable with.

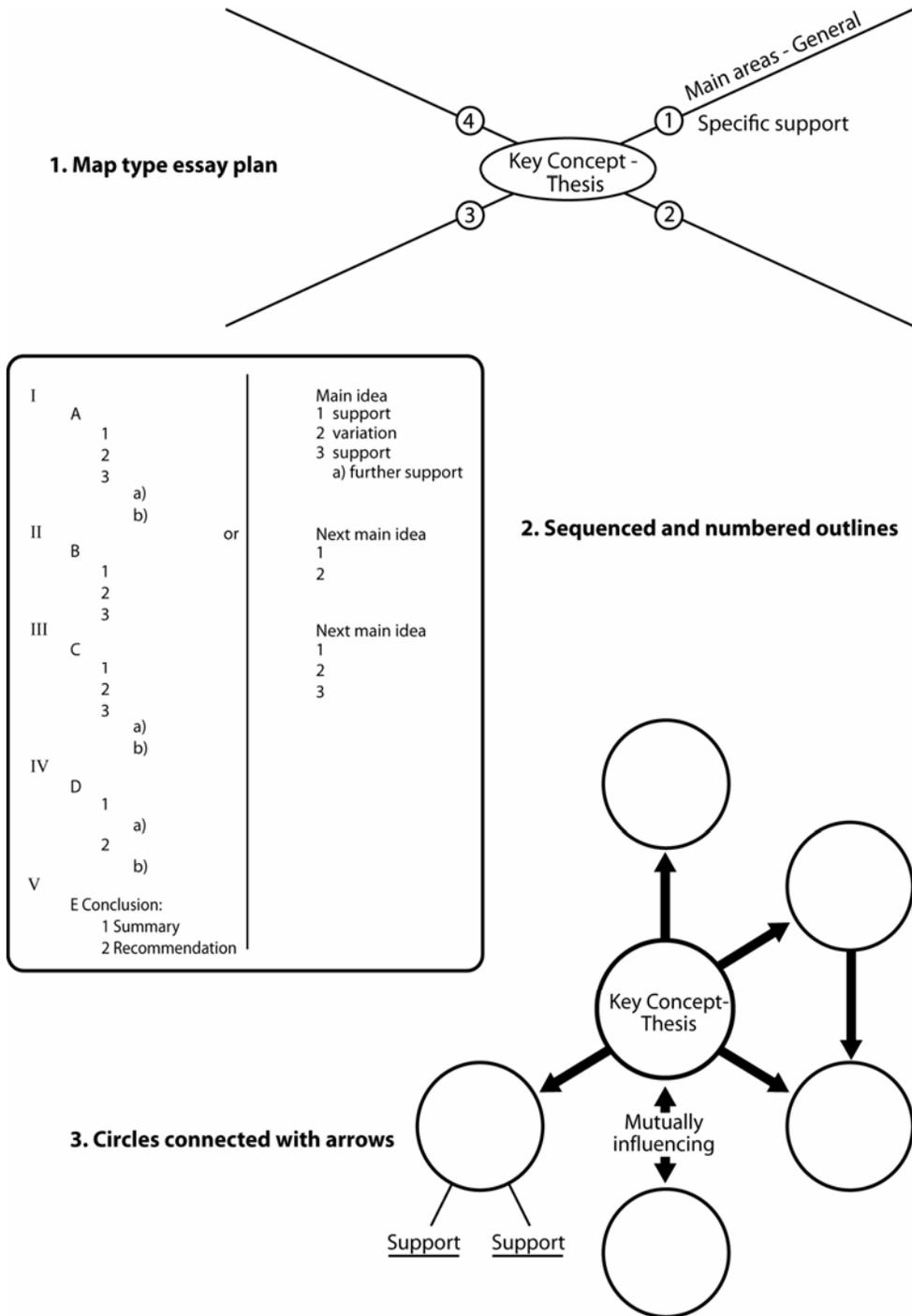


Figure 3.1: Ways of putting your thoughts and ideas in writing
Source: Cox, K. & Hill, D. (2004). *EAP now!: Students' book*. Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman Australia Pty. Ltd.

**ACTIVITY 3.1**

Do this activity either alone, in pairs, or in groups. Choose an essay topic and brainstorm the content of the essay. Write down all suggestions, no matter how silly they may sound to you. Keep these suggestions aside until later.

3.1.2 Drafting Stage

Different people adopt different strategies at this stage. You can come up with an outline and stick closely to this, or begin with the section you are most comfortable with. Alternately, you can just start writing without a plan. As a beginner, it is always good to have an outline or a plan for your essay. An essay outline might involve the following:

- Paragraph 1 – Introduction
- Paragraph 2 – Point (a)
- Paragraph 3 – Point (b)
- Paragraph 4 – Point (c)
- Paragraph 5 – Point (d)
- Paragraph 6 – Point (e)
- Paragraph 7 – Conclusion/Summary

**ACTIVITY 3.2**

Look at the notes you made during the pre-writing exercise (Activity 3.1). Read them through again and decide what you want to include and exclude from your essay. Rearrange and slot the points according to paragraphs. Write your essay based on your outline.

3.1.3 Editing Stage

After you have finished writing your essay draft, the next step is to reread the essay and edit it. At this stage, you will check the accuracy of content, clarity of expression, grammar, vocabulary and other aspects such as spelling, punctuation, format, and so on.



ACTIVITY 3.3

Reread your first draft and annotate on it. Exchange your annotated essay with your friend and ask him/her to give you feedback. Do the same for him/her. Take note of the suggestions and make changes accordingly.

3.1.4 Final Draft Stage

The final stage is to rewrite your final essay neatly. Remember to check that the format used is correct. It is always good to keep your annotated draft next to you for easy reference.



ACTIVITY 3.4

Rewrite your final essay using the annotated draft as a guide. Write neatly and ensure that the format is correct as you are going to hand in your essay after this stage.

(You may want to re-edit and repeat Step 3 again and again until you are satisfied.)

3.2 TYPES OF ESSAYS

Although there are many types of essays around, we are going to look at the three most common essays found in academic writing:

- (i) **Explanation essay**
An explanation essay usually starts with a general statement, followed by a series of explanations to support the statement.
- (ii) **Argumentation essay**
An argumentation essay, on the other hand, is persuasive in nature and usually begins with a thesis statement. The writer's opinion is then argued out and restated once again in the conclusion.
- (iii) **Discussion essay**
The discussion essay is very similar to the argumentation essay, except that it discusses both sides of the issue and lets the readers decide for themselves.

You are expected to make judgment, or form an opinion, on the type of essay you are going to write while researching your essay topic. One way to make judgment is to look at key phrases found in the topic given. For example, take a look at the essay questions below:

- (a) Explain why computers are becoming more important in our daily lives.
- (b) Many cosmetic and personal care products undergo safety testing before they are made available to consumers. Most of the time, this means exposing animals to chemical compounds. We should allow animal testing in scientific research provided no animal is harmed in the process. Discuss.
- (c) China in this new millennium decided to reconsider the "bamboo curtain" policy in order to cooperate and strengthen its ties with other countries. What has led to this policy shift and what are the possible consequences?



ACTIVITY 3.5

Look at the three essay questions above and underline the key terms for each question. Then, write a brief explanation of what you should include in your essay for each of the topics.

From Activity 3.5, you should have identified the key terms below:

- Explain
- Discuss
- What has
- What are

A brief explanation of what should be included in each essay is suggested below:

- (a) I must **talk about** why computers are becoming more important.
- (b) I must think about animal testing and **make a decision** whether I agree or disagree with the premise: "We should allow animal testing in scientific research provided no animal is harmed in the process." I **must define** "animal testing" and explain why this is an issue.
- (c) There are two questions that need to be answered here. I must research and find out what other people think about why China is trying to cooperate and strengthen its ties with other countries. I **must also explain** the reasons for the policy shift and speculate about possible consequences in the future.

3.3 DISCOURSE MARKERS

A *discourse marker* is a word or phrase used in a conversation to signal the speaker's intention to mark a boundary:

"*Anyway*, I'll have to be going now."

The function of *anyway* is to signal a change in the direction of the conversation, in this case to finish it, so *anyway* is a discourse marker here. Discourse markers can be used to focus, clarify, contrast, change the subject, show agreement or disagreement etc.

Source: *Discourse Marker – Glossary Definition - UsingEnglish.com.* (n.d.).
<http://www.usingenglish.com/glossary/discourse-marker.html>

There are many types of discourse markers in essay writing, depending on the purpose and relationship of the ideas you are trying to express. Table 3.1 shows some common discourse markers that you usually position at the start of a phrase or a clause.

Table 3.1: Examples of Different Types of Discourse Markers

Purpose / Relationship	Sentence Connectors	Position within Clause/Sentence
(i) Adding something	Moreover; In addition; Additionally; Further; Further to this; Also; Besides; What is more	Initial position
(ii) Making a contrast between two separate things, people, ideas etc.	However; On the other hand; In contrast; Yet	Initial position
(iii) Making an unexpected contrast (concession)	Although; Even though; Despite the fact that; In spite of the fact that; Regardless of the fact that	Initial position Starts a second/subordinate clause
(iv) Saying why something is the case	Because; Since; As; Insofar as	Initial position Starts a second/subordinate clause
(v) Saying what the result of something is	Therefore; Consequently; In consequence; As a result; Accordingly; Hence; Thus; For this reason; Because of this	Initial position
(vi) Expressing a condition	If; In the event of; As long as; So long as; Provided that; Assuming that; Given that	Initial position Starts a second/subordinate clause
(vii) Making what you say stronger	On the contrary; As a matter of fact; In fact; Indeed	Initial position

Besides the above examples, there are other types of discourse markers that we usually use in essay writing. This includes:

(i) **Time sequence markers** (Table 3.2)

Time sequence markers link sentences together, for example:

***First**, he went to the post office. **Then**, he stopped by the market.*

Table 3.2: Time Discourse Markers

Types	Sentence Connectors
(i) Time markers (general)	Before, since, as, until, meanwhile, at the moment, when, whenever, as soon as, just as
(ii) Sequence markers	First(ly), initially, second(ly), third(ly), to begin with, then, next, earlier/later, after this/that, following, afterwards, finally, lastly



(ii) **Addition and contrast markers** (Table 3.3)

Addition markers connect two sentences which are in agreement with each other or support a point. For example:

- *He likes watching movies.*
 - *He enjoys listening to music.*
- *He likes watching movies **and** listening to music.*

Contrast markers, on the other hand, link sentences which are not in agreement with each other. For example:

- *He did not agree.*
 - *He went along with the plan.*
- **Although** *he did not agree, he went along with the plan.*

Table 3.3: Addition and Contrast Markers

Types	Sentence Connectors
(i) Addition markers	And, in addition, further, also, both, ... not only ... but also, furthermore, moreover, besides
(ii) Contrast markers	However, but, albeit, though, on the other hand, in contrast, on the contrary, conversely, although, though, while, whereas, in spite of, despite

- (iii) **Contrast, deduction, example, addition, summation markers** (Table 3.4)
 These markers connect sentences which add information, summarise or give reasons to support a point.

Table 3.4: Contrast, Deduction, Example, Addition, and Summation Markers

Types	Sentence Connectors
(i) Add information	And, in addition, additionally, moreover, also, furthermore, as well as, ... not only ... but also
(ii) Contrast	But, whereas, on the contrary, on the other hand, however, despite
(iii) Summarise/Conclude	To summarise, in summary, in conclusion
(iv) Reason/result/cause/effect	Therefore, thus, though, because, as, if, so
(v) Give examples	For example, such as, for instance

- (iv) **Cause and effect markers** (Table 3.5)
 Cause and effect markers connect sentences which show cause and effect.
 For example:

- *There was a traffic jam.*
 - *I was late.*
- *There was a traffic jam, so I was late.*



Table 3.5: Cause and Effect Markers

Types	Sentence Connectors
Cause and effect markers	So, but, because, as, if, because, the reason, provided that, in comparison

3.4 WRITING PARAGRAPHS

This section will show you how paragraphs evolve in essay writing. It is assumed that you are already able to construct sentences on your own. Briefly, an essay consists of three sections: (1) an introduction, (2) the body, and (3) a conclusion. As every paragraph is a mini essay in itself, we can also say that the three sections of the essay exist in every paragraph.

As the name suggests, the introduction paragraph introduces the subject matter of the essay. Usually, the initial sentence introduces the topic and is followed by supporting sentences.

The topic sentence, or thesis statement, gives readers an understanding of what your essay is all about while the supporting sentences comprise evidence to support, verify, or provide meaning to the topic sentence (sometimes, with examples). The paragraph then ends with a concluding sentence that sometimes includes information on what comes next in the essay.

The next few paragraphs, called body paragraphs or support paragraphs, contain supporting evidence for the essay. The topic that you have chosen must now be supported through description, explanation or argument. In order to do that, list down all your main points to support your topic and expand each main point into a paragraph.

This process will result in several paragraphs within the body of the essay. Write each paragraph as if it is on its own, clearly stating what that paragraph is about in a topic sentence, then support that topic sentence with evidence (four or five sentences).

You can also provide examples, quotations, facts, and other evidence to support this paragraph. Some writers end with a summary line but this is not necessary.

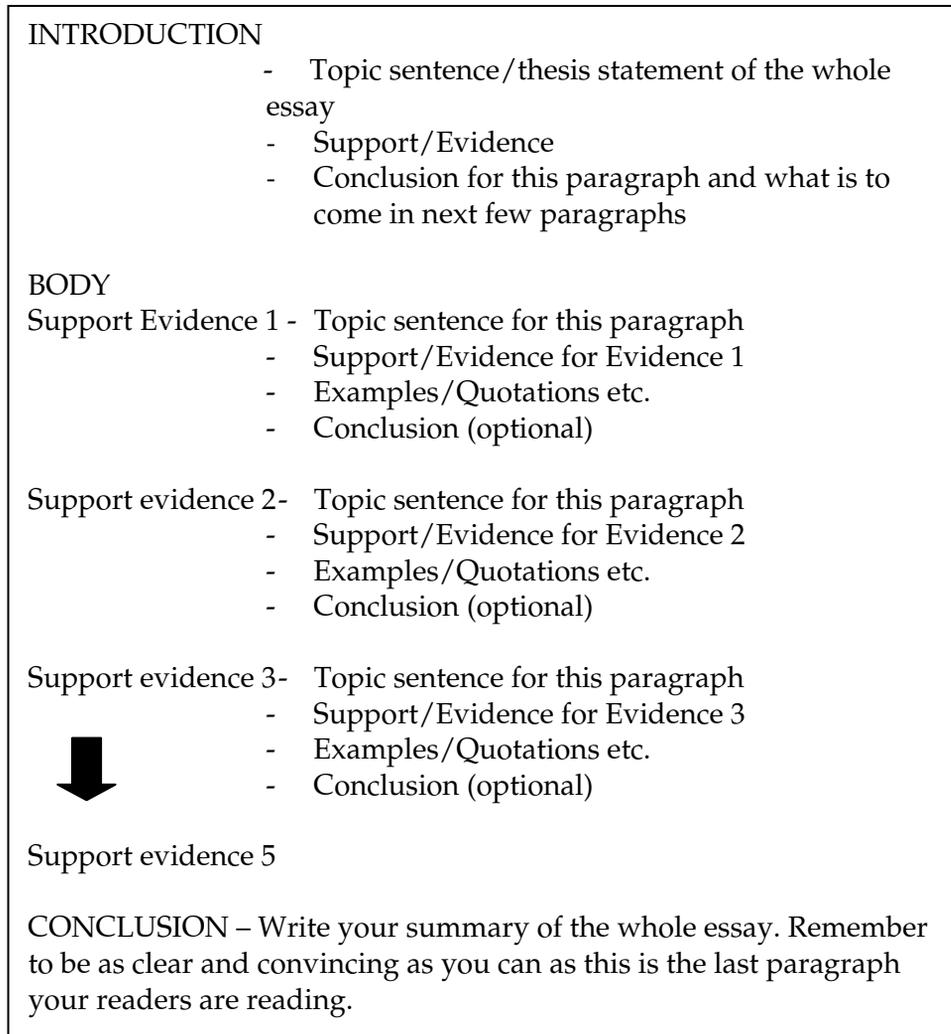
Lastly, write the summary or concluding paragraph. This paragraph will summarise the whole essay making clear to your readers, your understanding of the essay topics. Many people do not take this paragraph seriously as they think it is just a matter of stringing the points together. In actual fact, writing this paragraph can be tricky because you might add too many details or too little information.

The best thing to do is to read all your main points and sub-points. Then, in your own words, write about your understanding of the whole essay in the order it appears. You can use the thesis statement to begin this paragraph if you want to.

Remember to be concise and precise. Revise and check for accuracy. There you have it. It is done. You have written a very basic form of essay. You might want to let a few of your friends read your essay and revise accordingly based on their feedback.



The following is a basic outline for an essay:



It is fine if you are not producing great essays at this point as we will focus on each part of the essay in greater detail in the topics to come. At this stage, it is good if you can practice the four steps in essay planning: (1) pre-writing, (2) draft, (3) editing, and (4) final draft. It is also good to know the outline of a basic essay.

SUMMARY

- Writing a good essay requires some amount of planning. Basically, there are four stages involved:
 - (i) Pre-writing
 - (ii) Draft
 - (iii) Editing
 - (iv) Final draft/essay
- In academic writing, the three most common types of essay are:
 - (i) Explanation essay
 - (ii) Argumentation essay
 - (iii) Discussion essay
- A discourse marker is a **word** or **phrase** used in a conversation to signal the speaker's intention to mark a boundary.
- An essay consists of three sections:
 - (i) Introduction
 - (ii) Body
 - (iii) Conclusion

KEY TERMS

Body	Introduction
Conclusion	Thesis statement
Discourse markers	Topic sentence
Evidence	



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Topic 4 ▶ Types of Essays

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

1. Describe the different types of essays;
2. Prepare outlines for different essay types;
3. Discuss the concept of supporting evidence; and
4. Explain the concept of logical fallacies.

▶ INTRODUCTION

Essay writing is a very basic skill which should be learned by everybody. You were introduced to the basic essay outline in the previous topic. In this topic, you will learn that there are indeed many types of essay genres out there, for instance, narration, description, definition, evaluation and so on. This topic will highlight the three most frequently used essay genres in academic writing and some of the fallacies commonly found.



As explained in the previous topic, there are three main types of essay types – the explanation essay, the argumentation essay, and the discussion essay.

The main objective of an explanation essay is to clarify or explain issues, usually in the context of the natural and social sciences. To make your essay comprehensive, try answering all the Wh- questions pertaining to the topic you are writing on.

The argumentation essay, on the other hand, not only provides information but also contains supporting and opposing ideas. Its main objective is to persuade readers to side with the essay writer.

The discussion essay is somewhat similar to the argumentation essay at first glance, but it is actually the most taxing to write of the three genres mentioned. It contains information and the writer's personal views, supported by facts and evidence. It should not get too personal as reader's approval is not really the objective. The main objective is to discuss the issues objectively and let the readers think for themselves. As we delve deeper into this topic, we will learn these three genres in greater detail.

4.1 EXPLANATION ESSAY

According to the Cambridge Learner's Dictionary, an "explanation" means:

... the details or reasons that someone gives to make something clear or easy to understand.

This is further defined by *dictionary.com* as:

... the act or process of explaining.

OR

... a statement made to clarify something and make it understandable.

Thus, an explanation essay can be defined as an essay that explains things or processes in sequential order. The use of the simple present tense would be in order here.

So how do you handle an explanation essay? The same planning stages you have learned earlier can be applied when writing any essay. The only things to watch out for are the different content and various styles of writing essays.

For instance, for an explanation essay it is always good to start by giving the readers some general information about the subject that you are writing about in your introductory paragraph. The main idea sentence must be able to stand on its own and make complete sense by itself.

Try asking yourself some Wh-questions before writing your thesis statement:

- What?
- Who?
- Why?
- What for?
- When?
- How?

The body of the essay can be written based on three structural styles:

- (a) **Temporal sequential**
The points of the essay are written in a pretty linear way as in $a \rightarrow b \rightarrow c \rightarrow d$. Time markers are usually used to begin each paragraph to show the processes involved.
- (b) **Cyclical**
The main points are presented in a cyclical manner, for example, when we write about the hydrological cycle (formation of rainfall).
- (c) **Cause and effect**
An example of this type of essay would be explaining why traffic jams are common in a big city.

You can conclude the essay by summarising or giving additional information related to the process before ending.

**ACTIVITY 4.1**

An essay which is explanatory in nature can be written in three structures: (1) linear, (2) cyclical, or (3) cause and effect. Read the titles below and see which structure suits each essay.

1. Explain the life cycle of a butterfly.
2. One very important issue surrounding families today is the issue of working mothers. Women should not be allowed to work until their children are at least 12 years old. Discuss.
3. China in the 21st century is committed to strengthening exchange and cooperation with countries around the world. What are the historical and political factors which have led this policy shift and what will be the possible economic consequences?
4. Explain the cause of youth unemployment and the effect it has upon young people.
5. Explain the four seasons which occur in many parts of the world.
6. It wasn't until the 1960s that the rights of minorities became a focused issue for many Western countries. Trace the history of the policies in Australia which led to the end of the 'White Australia' policy in 1974.

Possible structures:

- (a) Steps in linear process _____
- (b) Steps in cyclical process _____
- (c) Explanation of something that has factors and conditions, reasons and effects _____

Source: Cox, K. & Hill, D. (2004). *EAP now!: Students' book*. Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman Australia Pty Ltd.

The example below shows the outline of an essay which describes the process of making an omelette:

How To Make An Omelette

An omelette is usually made with two or three eggs and is cooked very quickly in a sauté pan. As with so many established recipes and cooking techniques, the French are the masters of the omelette, which if cooked correctly, is light, moist, and slightly puffy. A non-stick pan works very well for preparing an omelette and is often preferred by the home cook, but professional chefs use an iron pan with a long handle that can be exclusively used for omelette making. A properly seasoned iron pan can be cleaned after each use simply by wiping it with a clean cloth or paper towel, rubbing the pan with salt, and giving the pan a final wipe to remove the salt. The salt treatment helps prevent eggs from sticking to the pan the next time it is used.

To begin preparing an omelette, crack open 2 or 3 eggs over a bowl, add salt and pepper (optional), and stir the eggs just until the whites and yolks begin to blend. The eggs should not be beaten vigorously.

Then place the sauté pan on high heat and thoroughly coat the bottom and sides of the pan with butter. After the butter is melted, it will begin to foam. When the foaming stops, the pan is hot enough to begin cooking the omelette. Make sure the pan is not so hot that the butter begins to brown. If this happens, the butter will quickly reach its smoke point, which will cause an unsatisfactory result.

Next pour the eggs into the pan. The eggs should begin to coagulate almost immediately. Using a few side to side and turning movements of your arm while grasping the handle of the pan, distribute the eggs in the pan, creating an even layer over the entire bottom of the pan.

After heating for a few more seconds, the eggs should begin to form into a mass resembling the unfolded omelette shape. Jerking the pan toward you should cause the omelette to roll over upon itself as it hits the side of the pan. Continue doing this for a few seconds until the omelette is folded into a pleasing form.

After tilting the omelette from the pan onto a plate, it is ready to serve. The actual cooking time is usually no more than 30 to 45 seconds. The omelette should be tender and moist. A dry omelette indicates that it has been cooked too long.

Ingredients that are more substantial in volume (such as cheese or chopped meat), should not be added to the omelette until after the eggs have coagulated, but the ingredients must be added prior to flipping the omelette in half. These ingredients are placed on one side of the omelette; then the omelette is folded. Folding the omelette in the pan using the flipping technique might not work as well as it does when folding a plain omelette, so a spatula is most often used to fold the omelette in the pan. The extra ingredients can also be placed on top of the plain omelette immediately before serving.

4.2 ARGUMENTATION ESSAY

In this type of essay, you try to win your readers over so that they will agree with what you say, accept your facts, embrace your values, and adopt your arguments and way of thinking.

I am sure that sounds like a lot of hard work but that is only because it is. For it to be effective, there must be a certain convention that needs to be followed. This is why you must take time to plan before writing an argumentation essay.

The first thing to do is to read the topic given to you. Once you have read the topic, underline the key words. Write down a few other words, if possible, that are similar in meaning with the key words. This will help your understanding further.

Once you have understood the topic, you have to decide whether you are for or against the idea found in the topic. Just merely agreeing or disagreeing would not help you write a good essay. Besides considering the position you are going to take, you also need to ensure that you have reasons to back your stand. You also need to be clear about the two conflicting perspectives that you are going to present in the essay before taking a stand and backing it up with your reasoning or evidence.

After all this is done, write the conclusion and re-emphasize your position or stand about the issues discussed.

Use the basic essay outline discussed earlier. Your essay should have an introduction, body and conclusion. The introductory paragraph of your essay should provide a general explanation of your topic, some background information and a thesis statement or topic sentence.

In this type of essay, your thesis statement would be your stand or the position you are taking concerning the topic. The body of your essay is like the main course of a meal, so it is very important that the argument is solid. This is where you present your arguments in greater detail with evidence to support your stand, and try to convince the audience why your stand is the right one.

You can use a variety of ways to present your evidence such as statistics, other studies, popular beliefs and stories. While arguing out your points, avoid and look out for “logical fallacies” or poor arguments. We will discuss more of these fallacies towards the end of this topic.

When making claims in an argumentation essay, it is not enough to only have solid evidence to back them up. You also need to anticipate counter-arguments and be prepared to address them.

There are number of ways by which you can generate counterarguments:

- By taking the opposing side for a moment;
- By doing thorough research on the topic; and
- By discussing the topic over with a friend.

The conclusion is very important since it is the last part that your readers will read and probably what they will remember most. So make sure you make your stand clear and not confusing. In this paragraph, you should remind your readers about the issue at hand, summarise the main points, re-emphasis your opinion (if you have given it earlier) and give a glimpse of what is to come if the situation remains or changes. Remember to keep your conclusion precise and concise, not lengthy.

Your essay layout can be as basic as 1-3-1. This means that the essay comprises five paragraphs:

- An introduction (one paragraph);
- Three arguments that support the thesis (three paragraphs); and
- A conclusion (one paragraph).

Tip:

While the conclusion part is almost similar to the introduction part, avoid using the same words. Rephrase or use different words to convey the same meaning. This is why you need to widen your pool of vocabulary. For practice, try using the thesaurus to look up synonyms from time to time.

Health and Healing at Your Fingertips

Throw out the bottles and boxes of drugs in your house. A new theory suggests that medicine could be bad for your health, which should at least come as good news to people who cannot afford to buy expensive medicine. However, it is a blow to the medicine industry, and an even bigger blow to our confidence in the progress of science. This new theory argues that healing is at our fingertips: we can be healthy by doing Reiki on a regular basis.

Supporters of medical treatment argue that medicine should be trusted since it is effective and scientifically proven. They say that there is no need for spiritual methods such as Reiki, Yoga, Tai Chi. These waste our time, something which is quite precious in our material world. There is medicine that can kill our pain, x-rays that show us our fractured bones or MRI that scans our brain for tumors. We must admit that these methods are very effective in the examples that they provide. However, there are some “every day complaints” such as back pains, headaches, insomnia, which are treated currently with medicine. When you have a headache, you take an Aspirin, or Vermidon, when you cannot sleep, you take Xanax without thinking of the side effects of these. When you use these pills for a long period, you become addicted to them; you cannot sleep without them. We pay huge amounts of money and become addicted instead of getting better. How about a safer and more economical way of healing? When doing Reiki to yourself, you do not need anything except your energy so it is very economical. As for its history, it was discovered in Japan in the early 1900s and its popularity has spread particularly throughout America and Western Europe. In quantum physics, energy is recognized as the fundamental substance of which the universe is composed. Reiki depends on the energy within our bodies. It is a simple and effective way of restoring the energy flow. There are no side effects and it is scientifically explained.

Opponents of alternative healing methods also claim that serious illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and cancer cannot be treated without drugs. They think so because these patients spend the rest of their lives in the hospital taking medicine. How can Reiki make these people healthy again? It is very unfortunate that these patients have to live in the hospital losing their hair because of chemotherapy, losing weight because of the side effects of the medicine they take. Actually, it is common knowledge that except for when the cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, drugs also cannot treat AIDS or cancer. Most of the medicine these patients use are to ease their pain and their sufferings because of the medical treatment they undergo. Instead of drugs which are expensive and have many side effects, you can use your energy to overcome the hardships of life, find an emotional balance, leave the stress of everyday life and let go of the everyday worries. Most of the chronic conditions such as eczema or migraine are known to have causes such as poor diet and stress. Deep-rooted anger or other strong emotions can contribute to viral infections as well. Since balancing our emotions and controlling our thoughts are very important for our well-being, we should definitely start learning Reiki and avoid illnesses before it is too late.

Some people may still maintain that in our material world, everything depends on time. It is even “lacking time” that causes much of the stress that leads to the illnesses we mentioned. How would it be possible to find time to do Reiki to ourselves and the people around us when we cannot even find time to go to the theater? This is one good thing about Reiki; it does not require more than 15 minutes of our time. There is no need for changing clothes or special equipment. It is a wonderfully simple healing art, an effective method of relaxation and stress-relief. Most important of all, it is less time consuming than medicine if we think of all the time we spend taking medicine for some complaints and taking some more for the side effects as well.

Having said these, resistance to Reiki would be quite illogical. Reiki is natural and drug-free. What is more, it is easy to learn by anyone, regardless of age and experience. It can be used anywhere, anytime. It also enhances physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being and the benefits last a lifetime. It is definitely high time to get away from the drug boxes we store in our drug cabinet!

Oya Ozagac. *Health and healing at your fingertips*. (n.d.). Retrieved September 2004, from <http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/>



ACTIVITY 4.2

There are various stages in an argumentation essay. Using the essay *Health and Healing at Your Fingertips*, can you identify the stages? Discuss this with your tutor.

4.3 DISCUSSION ESSAY

The last type of essay we are going to look at is the discussion essay. In academic writing, the term “discussion” usually refers to discussing both sides of an issue or topic, or discussing the results of a certain research and its implications. In an argumentation essay, we present our views and provide evidence to support our arguments in order to persuade the readers to agree with us. However, in a discussion essay, we do not actually do this. In this type of essay, we present both sides of the issue and let the readers decide for themselves which side of the fence they want to be on.

Basically, as the writer of a discussion essay, you should cover both sides of the issue/ topic, provide evidence for your discussion, and weigh the evidence to make your conclusion.

**SELF-CHECK 4.1**

What is the difference between a discussion essay and an argumentation essay?

4.4 SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Having a good thesis statement and outline does not guarantee a good essay. It needs to be supported with solid evidence in order to convince the readers.

4.4.1 Types of Evidence

There are many types of evidence that you can use in essay writing and they can be from primary or secondary sources. Primary source, as the name suggests is first hand information, while secondary source simply means information that is created out of the primary source.

Evidence can be in the form of facts, quotes, opinion of experts, anecdotes, examples, or charts and diagrams. The role of evidence or supporting details is to support your thesis statement:

- (i) **Fact:** Fact is information from something that actually exists in reality, for example, statistics.
- (ii) **Quotes:** Comments from a credible source. Remember not to overuse this.
- (iii) **Opinion of experts:** Opinion from experts in the subject of your writing.
- (iv) **Anecdotes:** Short accounts of interesting or humorous incidents. These can liven up a boring academic essay.
- (v) **Examples:** An example is one that is a representative of the whole group. Examples are great at clarifying your points.
- (vi) **Charts/Diagrams:** Drawings or illustrations can be used to clarify complex concepts in our writing.

4.4.2 How to Use Evidence

To ensure that your thesis statement is strongly supported, you must follow certain rules to ensure that the evidence used is credible and valid:

- (i) Ensure the accuracy of each fact – accuracy of information is crucial especially with dates, figures, and names.
- (ii) Facts must be recent (not outdated), reliable and not biased.
- (iii) Only use facts that are relevant to your writing.
- (iv) Make sure you have enough facts for each point you want to make.
- (v) Arrange facts from general to specific or vice versa.

4.5 LOGICAL FALLACIES

According to the online Encyclopedia Britannica, a fallacy is:

... an erroneous reasoning that has the appearance of soundness.

This error of reasoning is further explained by a website on logical fallacies:

... when someone adopts a position, or tries to persuade someone else to adopt a position, based on a bad piece of reasoning, they commit a fallacy.

You need to be aware of fallacies when writing essays, especially the argumentative kind. There are many types of fallacies. Some as listed by www.logicalfallacies.com are as stated on the next page:

Fallacies of Relevance

- Ad Hominem (Personal Attack)
- Bandwagon Fallacy
- Fallacist's Fallacy
- Fallacy of Composition
- Fallacy of Division
- Gambler's Fallacy
- Genetic Fallacy
- Irrelevant Appeals
 - (a) Appeal to Antiquity/Tradition
 - (b) Appeal to Authority
 - (c) Appeal to Consequences
 - (d) Appeal to Force
 - (e) Appeal to Novelty
 - (f) Appeal to Pity
 - (g) Appeal to Popularity
 - (h) Appeal to Poverty
 - (i) Appeal to Wealth
- Moralistic Fallacy
- Naturalistic Fallacy
- Red Herring
- Weak Analogy

Fallacies of Ambiguity

- Accent Fallacies
- Equivocation Fallacy
- Straw Man Fallacy

Fallacies of Presumption

- Affirming the Consequent
- Arguing from Ignorance
- Begging the Question/Circular Reasoning
- Complex Question Fallacy
- Cum Hoc Fallacy
- False Dilemma/Bifurcation Fallacy
- Hasty Generalisation Fallacy
- 'No True Scotsman' Fallacy
- Post Hoc Fallacy
- Slippery Slope Fallacy
- Sweeping Generalisation Fallacy
- Subjectivist Fallacy
- Tu Quoque Fallacy

We will not cover all the fallacies listed above. You can visit the website and read it in greater detail if you are interested to know more about these fallacies. However, we will highlight and explain the more popular ones, as listed in the University of North Carolina website *www.unc.edu*:

4.5.1 Hasty Generalisation

Definition:

Making assumptions about a whole group or range of cases based on a sample that is inadequate (usually because it is atypical or just too small). Stereotypes about people (*Frat boys are drunkards; Grad students are nerdy*, etc.) are common examples of the principle underlying hasty generalisation.

Example:

My roommate said her philosophy class was hard, and the one I'm in is hard, too. All philosophy classes must be hard!

Two people's experiences are, in this case, not enough on which to base a conclusion.

Tip:

Ask yourself what kind of "sample" you're using: Are you relying on the opinions or experiences of just a few people, or your own experience in just a few situations? If so, consider whether you need more evidence, or perhaps a less sweeping conclusion. (Notice that in the example, the more modest conclusion "*Some* philosophy classes are hard for *some* students" would not be a hasty generalisation.)

4.5.2 Missing the Point

Definition:

The premises of an argument do support a particular conclusion – but not the conclusion that the arguer actually draws.

Example:

The seriousness of a punishment should match the seriousness of the crime. Right now, the punishment for drunk driving may simply be a fine. But drunk driving is a very serious crime that can kill innocent people. So the death penalty should be the punishment for drunk driving.

The argument actually supports several conclusions – *The punishment for drunk driving should be very serious* in particular – but it does not support the claim that the death penalty, specifically, is warranted.

Tip:

Separate your premises from your conclusion. Looking at the premises, ask yourself what conclusion an objective person would reach after reading them. Looking at your conclusion, ask yourself what kind of evidence would be required to support such a conclusion, and then see if you've actually given that evidence. Missing the point often occurs when a sweeping or extreme conclusion is being drawn, so be especially careful if you know you're claiming something big.

4.5.3 *Post hoc* (False Cause)

This fallacy gets its name from the Latin phrase *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, which translates as "after this, therefore because of this."

Definition:

Assuming that because B comes after A, A caused B. Of course, sometimes one event really does cause another one that comes later – for example, if I register for a class, and my name later appears on the roll, it's true that the first event caused the one that came later. But sometimes two events that seem related in time are not really related as cause and effect. That is, correlation is NOT the same thing as causation.

Examples:

President Jones raised taxes, and then the rate of violent crime went up. Jones is responsible for the rise in crime. The increase in taxes might or might not be one factor in the rising crime rates, but the argument has not shown us that one caused the other.

Tip:

To avoid the *post hoc* fallacy, the arguer would need to give us some explanation of the process by which the tax increase is supposed to have produced higher crime rates. And that's what you should do to avoid committing this fallacy: If you say that A caused B, you should have something more to say about how A caused B than just that A came first and B came later!

4.5.4 Slippery Slope

Definition:

The arguer claims that a sort of chain reaction, usually ending in some dire consequence, will take place, but there's really not enough evidence for that assumption. The arguer asserts that if we take even one step onto the "slippery slope," we will end up sliding all the way to the bottom; he or she assumes we can't stop halfway down the hill.

Example:

Animal experimentation reduces our respect for life. If we don't respect life, we are likely to be more and more tolerant of violent acts like war and murder. Soon our society will become a battlefield in which everyone constantly fears for his/her life. It will be the end of civilisation. To prevent this terrible consequence, we should make animal experimentation illegal right now.

Since animal experimentation has been legal for some time and civilisation has not yet ended, it seems clear that this chain of events won't necessarily take place. Even if we believe that experimenting on animals reduces respect for life, and loss of respect for life makes us more tolerant of violence, that may be the spot on

the hillside at which things stop – we may not slide all the way down to the end of civilisation. And so there is insufficient reason to accept the arguer's conclusion that we must make animal experimentation illegal right now.

Like post hoc, slippery slope can be tricky to identify because sometimes a chain of events can be predicted to follow a certain action. Here is an example: *If I fail English 101, I won't be able to graduate. If I don't graduate, I probably won't be able to get a good job, and I may very well end up doing temp work or flipping burgers for the next year.*

Tip:

Check your argument for chains of consequences, where you say "if A, then B, and if B, then C," and so forth. Make sure these chains are reasonable.

4.5.5 Weak Analogy

Definition:

Many arguments rely on an analogy between two or more objects, ideas or situations. If the two things that are being compared are not really alike, the analogy is a weak one, and the argument that relies on it commits the fallacy of weak analogy.

Example: *Guns are like hammers – they're both tools with metal parts that could be used to kill someone. And yet it would be ridiculous to restrict the purchase of hammers – so restrictions on purchasing guns are equally ridiculous.*

While guns and hammers do share certain features, these features (having metal parts) are not the ones at stake in deciding whether to restrict guns. Rather, we restrict guns because they can be used to kill large numbers of people at a distance. This is a feature hammers do not share – it'd be hard to kill a crowd with a hammer. Thus, the analogy is weak and so is the argument based on it.

Tip:

Identify what properties are important to the claim you are making, and see whether the two things you are comparing both share those properties.

4.5.6 Appeal to Authority

Definition:

Often we add strength to our arguments by referring to respected sources or authorities and explaining their positions on the issues we're discussing. If, however, we try to get readers to agree with us simply by impressing them with

a famous name or by appealing to a supposed authority who isn't much of an expert, we commit the fallacy of appeal to authority.

Example:

We should abolish the death penalty. Many respected people, such as actor Guy Handsome, have publicly stated their opposition to it. While Guy Handsome may be an authority on matters related to acting, there is no particular reason why anyone should be moved by his political.

Tip: There are two easy ways to avoid committing this fallacy. First, make sure that the authorities you cite are experts on the subject you are discussing. Second, rather than just saying "Dr Authority believes x, so we should believe it, too," try to explain the reasoning or evidence that the authority used to arrive at his/her opinion. It also helps to choose authorities who are perceived as fairly neutral or reasonable, rather than people perceived as biased.

4.5.7 *Ad Populum*

Definition:

The Latin name of this fallacy means "to the people." There are several versions of the *ad populum* fallacy, but what they all have in common is that the arguer takes advantage of the desire most people have to be liked and to fit in with others and uses that desire to try to get the audience to accept his/her argument. One of the most common versions is the bandwagon fallacy, in which the arguer tries to convince the audience to do something because everyone else (supposedly) does.

Example:

Gay marriages are just immoral. 70% of Americans think so! While the opinion of most Americans might be relevant in determining what laws we should have, it certainly does not determine what is moral or immoral.

Tip:

Make sure that you aren't recommending that your audience believe your conclusion because everyone else believes it, all the cool people believe it, people will like you better if you believe it, and so forth. Keep in mind that popular opinion is not always right.

4.5.8 *Ad Hominem* and *Tu Quoque*

Definitions:

The *ad hominem* ("against the person") and *tu quoque* ("you, too!") fallacies focus our attention on people rather than on arguments or evidence. In both of these arguments, the conclusion is usually "You shouldn't believe So-and-So's argument." The reason for not believing So-and-So is that So-and-So is either a bad person (*ad hominem*) or a hypocrite (*tu quoque*). In an *ad hominem* argument, the arguer attacks his or her opponent instead of the opponent's argument.

Examples:

Andrea Dworkin has written several books arguing that pornography harms women. But Dworkin is an ugly, bitter person, so you shouldn't listen to her. Dworkin's appearance and character have nothing to do with the strength of her argument, so using them as evidence is fallacious.

In a *tu quoque* argument, the arguer points out that the opponent has actually done the thing he/she is arguing against, and so the opponent's argument shouldn't be listened to. Here's an example: Imagine that your parents have explained to you why you should not smoke – the damage to your health. You reply: *I won't accept your argument because you used to smoke when you were my age. You did it, too!* The fact that your parents have done the very thing they are condemning has no bearing on the premise they put forward in their argument (smoking harms your health and is very expensive), so your response is fallacious.

Tip:

Be sure to stay focused on your opponents' reasoning, rather than on their character.

4.5.9 Appeal to Pity

Definition:

Appeal to pity takes place when an arguer tries to get people to accept a conclusion by making them feel sorry for someone.

Examples:

I know the exam is graded based on performance, but you should give me an A. My cat has been sick, my car broke down, and I've had a cold, so it was really hard for me to study.

The conclusion here is "You should give me an A." But the criteria for getting an A has to do with learning and applying the material from the course. The principle the arguer wants us to accept (people who have a hard week deserve A's) is unacceptable. The information the arguer has given might *feel* relevant but it is not and so the argument is fallacious.

Tip:

Make sure that you aren't simply trying to get your readers to agree with you by making them feel sorry for someone.

4.5.10 Appeal to Ignorance

Definition: In the appeal to ignorance, the arguer basically says: "Look, there's no conclusive evidence on the issue at hand. Therefore, you should accept my conclusion on this issue."

Example: *People have been trying for centuries to prove that God exists. But no one has yet been able to prove it. Therefore, God does not exist.* Here's an opposing argument that commits the same fallacy: *People have been trying for years to prove that God does not exist. But no one has yet been able to prove it. Therefore, God exists.* In each case, the arguer tries to use the lack of evidence as support for a positive claim about the truth of a conclusion. There is one situation in which doing this is not fallacious: If qualified researchers have used well-thought-out methods to search for something for a long time, they haven't found it, and it's the kind of thing people ought to be able to find, then the fact that they haven't found it constitutes some evidence that it does not exist.

Tip: Look closely at arguments where you point out a lack of evidence and then draw a conclusion from that lack of evidence.

4.5.11 Straw Man

Definition:

One way of making your argument stronger is to anticipate and respond in advance to the arguments that an opponent might make. In the straw man fallacy, the arguer sets up a wimpy version of the opponent's position and tries to score points by knocking it down. But just as being able to knock down a straw man is not really impressive, defeating a watered-down version of your opponent's argument is not impressive either.

Example:

"Feminists want to ban all pornography and punish everyone who reads it! But such harsh measures are surely inappropriate, so the feminists are wrong: porn and its readers should be left in peace."

The feminist argument is made weak by being overstated – in fact, most feminists do not propose an outright "ban" on porn or any punishment for those who merely read it; often, they propose some restrictions on things like child porn, or propose to allow people who are hurt by porn to sue publishers and producers, not readers, for damages. So the arguer hasn't really scored any points; he or she has just committed a fallacy.

Tip:

Be charitable to your opponents. State their arguments as strongly, accurately, and sympathetically as possible. If you can knock down even the best version of an opponent's argument, then you've really accomplished something.

4.5.12 Red Herring

Definition: Halfway through an argument, the arguer goes off on a tangent, raising a side issue that distracts the audience from what's really at stake. Often, the arguer never returns to the original issue.

Example:

"Grading this exam on a curve would be the most fair thing to do. After all, classes go more smoothly when the students and the professor are getting along well." Let's try our premise-conclusion outlining to see what's wrong with this argument:

Premise: Classes go more smoothly when the students and the professor are getting along well.

Conclusion: Grading this exam on a curve would be the most fair thing to do.

When we lay it out this way, it's pretty obvious that the arguer went off on a tangent – the fact that something helps people get along doesn't necessarily make it more fair; fairness and justice sometimes require us to do things that cause conflict. But the audience may feel like the issue of teachers and students agreeing is important and be distracted from the fact that the arguer has not given any evidence as to why a curve would be fair.

Tip:

Try laying your premises and conclusion out in an outline-like form. How many issues do you see being raised in your argument? Can you explain how each premise supports the conclusion?

4.5.13 False Dichotomy

Definition:

The arguer sets up the situation so it looks like there are only two choices. The arguer then eliminates one of the choices, so it seems that we are left with only one option: the one the arguer wanted us to pick in the first place. But often there are really many different options, not just two – and if we thought about them all, we might not be so quick to pick the one the arguer recommends!

Example:

"Caldwell Hall is in bad shape. Either we tear it down and put up a new building, or we continue to risk students' safety. Obviously we shouldn't risk anyone's safety, so we must tear the building down." The argument neglects to mention the possibility that we might repair the building or find some way to protect students from the risks in question – for example, if only a few rooms are in bad shape, perhaps we shouldn't hold classes in those rooms.

Tip:

Examine your own arguments: If you're saying that we have to choose between just two options, is that really so? Or are there other alternatives you haven't mentioned?

4.5.14 Begging the Question

Definition: Basically, an argument that begs the question asks the reader to simply accept the conclusion without providing real evidence; the argument either relies on a premise that says the same thing as the conclusion ("circular reasoning"), or simply ignores an important (but questionable) assumption that the argument rests on.

Examples: "Active euthanasia is morally acceptable. It is a decent, ethical thing to help another human being escape suffering through death." Let's lay this out in premise-conclusion form:

Premise: It is a decent, ethical thing to help another human being escape suffering through death.

Conclusion: Active euthanasia is morally acceptable.

If we "translate" the premise, we'll see that the arguer has really just said the same thing twice: "decent, ethical" means pretty much the same thing as "morally acceptable," and "help another human being escape suffering through death" means "active euthanasia." So the premise basically says, "active euthanasia is morally acceptable," just like the conclusion does! The arguer hasn't yet given us any real reasons *why* euthanasia is acceptable; instead, she has left us asking "well, really, why do you think active euthanasia is acceptable?" Her argument "begs" (that is, evades) the real question.

Tip:

One way to avoid begging the question is to write out your premises and conclusion in a short, outline-like form. See if you notice any gaps that are required to move from one premise to the next or from the premises to the conclusion. Write down the statements that would fill those gaps. If the statements are controversial and you've just glossed over them, you might be begging the question. Next, check to see whether any of your premises basically says the same thing as the conclusion (but in other words). If so, you're begging the question. The moral of the story: You can't just assume or use as uncontroversial evidence the very thing you're trying to prove.

4.5.15 Equivocation

Definition: Equivocation is sliding between two or more different meanings of a single word or phrase that is important to the argument.

Example:

"Giving money to charity is the right thing to do. So charities have a right to our money." The equivocation here is on the word "right": "right" can mean both something that is correct or good (as in "I got the right answers on the test") and something to which someone has a claim (as in "everyone has a right to life"). Sometimes an arguer will deliberately, sneakily equivocate, often on words like "freedom," "justice," "rights," and so forth; other times, the equivocation is a mistake or misunderstanding. Either way, it's important that you use the main terms of your argument consistently.

Tip:

Identify the most important words and phrases in your argument and ask yourself whether they could have more than one meaning. If they could, be sure you aren't slipping and sliding between those meanings.

SUMMARY

- An explanation essay can be defined as an essay that explains things or processes in sequential order.
- An argumentation essay tries to win the audience over so that they agree with what we say, accept our facts, embrace our values, and adopt our arguments and way of thinking.
- In a discussion essay, we present both sides of the issue and let the audience decide for themselves which side of the fence they want to be in.
- Having a good thesis statement and outline does not guarantee a good essay. It needs to be supported with solid evidence in order to convince the audience.
- When someone adopts a position, or tries to persuade someone else to adopt a position based on a bad piece of reasoning, they are committing a logical fallacy.

KEY TERMS

Ad hominem	Fallacies of relevance
Ad populum	False dichotomy
Appeal to authority	Hasty generalization
Appeal to ignorance	Logical fallacies
Appeal to pity	Missing the point
Argumentation essay	Post hoc (false cause)
Begging the question	Red herring
Discussion essay	Slippery slope
Equivocation	Straw man
Explanation essay	Supporting evidence
Fallacies of ambiguity	Tu quoque
Fallacies of presumption	Weak analogy



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Topic 5 ▶ Tackling Essays

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

1. Write and develop paragraphs;
2. Answer one-part and multi-part essay questions;
3. Explain the relevance of creative writing;
4. Write bibliographies correctly;
5. Check for plagiarism and screen information effectively; and
6. Interpret visual cues.

▶ INTRODUCTION

In the earlier topics, we introduced you to essays and essay genres, and explained how to plan for good essays. In this topic, you will be introduced to techniques that will help you to handle essay writing better. You will see how a paragraph is developed and learn various techniques that can be used to develop paragraphs. Although the previous topics highlighted the many rules and structures found in different genres of essays, we would like to remind you that creative writing has a role to play in academic writing too. Essay questions can sometimes comprise more than one part; hence you will need to identify multi-part essay questions so that you can answer all the parts in your essay. You will also be taught to cite and acknowledge resources that you have borrowed so as not to commit plagiarism. This topic will also give useful pointers on how to screen for information needed for your research. You will also be given opportunities to familiarise yourself with the language of charts and graphs.

5.1 WRITING PARAGRAPHS

You were introduced to paragraph writing in Topic 3. In this section you will be shown in greater detail how a paragraph is formed.

A paragraph can be considered as a group of sentences that is self-contained and focuses on a particular idea or point to develop the topic. It is made up of a topic sentence, supporting sentence/s and a concluding sentence. In another word it is like a mini essay in itself.

The topic sentence is usually a general statement about the topic. Most of the time, it is the first sentence in the introductory paragraph. Next is the supporting sentence or sentences. As the name suggests, the supporting sentence supports the topic sentence. Sometimes, there can be a couple of supporting sentences. They provide more information about the topic sentence. The concluding sentence summarises the whole idea for the paragraph. However, if the paragraph you are working on is the introductory paragraph of an essay, then the concluding sentence does more than just summarise the paragraph; it also gives you an idea of what is to come in the following paragraphs.



ACTIVITY 5.1

Do this activity in small groups:

Choose an essay topic, preferably one which is suitable for writing a narrative essay. Write a first paragraph for the essay. To do this, follow the structure described earlier, i.e. come up with a topic sentence/s, supporting sentence and concluding sentence.

The steps below will guide you in writing the first paragraph:

- Begin with a topic sentence. After you have finished writing the topic sentence, exchange it with the others in your group.
- Discuss and comment on each other's topic sentence.
- Select the best topic sentence and use this for your essay.
- Now, do the same for the supporting details and concluding sentence.
- Put all the adopted sentences together in one paragraph. Now you have the first paragraph for your essay.

Another thing to remember is that when writing ideas down in English, the main thought or most important point usually comes first. This is true, even at sentence level. This is something useful to remember, especially when formulating topic sentences.

For example, if you want to tell someone what you did last night (that is, went to a movie):

You DON'T say:

- (a) *The book I read last night was very good, OR*
- (b) *I read a very good book last night.*

You say:

- (c) *Last night, I read a very good book.*

There is nothing grammatically wrong in sentence (a) or (b). But the *order* is wrong. Of the three sentences above, (c) is the only one which correctly expresses the importance of what you did last night.

In a nutshell, if your aim is to talk about what you did last night, then "*Last night, I...*" becomes the theme or the most important idea. Hence, it comes at the beginning of the topic sentence. The end of the sentence – *very good book* – is the other important idea in the sentence.

There are other ways to develop your topic sentence. You can do this by:

- (i) **Describing the topic sentence further**
(Topic sentence) **I received a beautiful red bicycle for my birthday.** *It has a small square rattan basket at the front and a blinking red tail light to make it visible to others at night.*
- (ii) **Providing reasons**
(Topic sentence) **This bank is better than that one.** *It gives out high interest rate on all your savings regardless of the amount you deposited.*
- (iii) **Defining and giving examples**
(Topic sentence) **Technology has made it possible to put GPS on your mobile phone.** *GPS or Global Positioning System is a navigation tool that uses satellite technology to pinpoint your location. For example, you can navigate from point A to point B simply by pressing a few buttons.*

You can also develop your topic sentence by showing cause and effect relationships, listing down details, drawing analogies, and comparing and contrasting.

5.2 TACKLING ESSAY QUESTIONS

Part of successful essay writing is to ensure that you write according to what the question wants. Read the question twice to be sure that you understand it correctly. Try to interpret the question by underlining key words found in the question. Some essay questions have more than one question in it.

An example of a multi-part essay question is given below.

CFC and a few other substances are responsible for ozone depletion. Explain what CFC is and how it depletes the ozone layer. Discuss ways to prevent this harmful substance from damaging the ozone layer further.

There are three parts to the question above:

- (i) Explain what CFC is;
- (ii) How it depletes the ozone; and
- (iii) Discuss ways to reduce its harmful effects.

Once you understand the question, ask yourself if you know the subject matter. If your answer is *YES*, start writing down the facts. However, if your answer is *NO*, then start researching the topic and read more about it before you start writing. It is always good to take another close look at all the key terms and try to determine what the essay genre is. Recognising the genre will help you come up with the appropriate essay outline.

It is usually sufficient to answer a straightforward essay question (a one-part question) using the classic five-paragraph essay. This type of essay, as the name suggests, comprises five paragraphs.

- Paragraph 1 – Introduction
- Paragraph 2 – Body (point 1)
- Paragraph 3 – Body (point 2)
- Paragraph 4 – Body (point 3)
- Paragraph 5 – Conclusion



However, this would not work with a multi-part essay. In the multi-part essay, each main paragraph (body) must answer part of the question. Transition words

such as *however*, *while*, *and*, *but* and others are used to signal a change in direction in the essay so as to accommodate other parts of the answer. There is no specific outline for a multi-part essay question.

5.3 CREATIVE WRITING

In contrast to academic writing, creative writing does not have specific rules, forms or outlines that you need to follow. Creative writing can be fiction, poetry or non-fiction. Genres such as poetry, novels, short stories and even plays fall under creative writing.

Marksberry in her book, *Foundation of Creativity*, quoted Witty and LaBrant to define creativity as:

... a composition of any type of writing at any time primarily in the service of such needs as:

- (a) The need for keeping records of significant experience;
- (b) The need for sharing experience with an interested group; and
- (c) The need for free individual expression which contributes to mental and physical health.

So why is creative writing mentioned here? While this module does not attempt to teach creative writing per se, it does try to encourage you to be a little more creative in your academic writing. Being in touch with your creative side will enable you to express yourself better, with more precise words and original sentences. It will also help you to find your own style, voice and tone within all the rules, forms and outlines of academic writing. But to be able to do this, you need to read extensively into creative writing genres. Reading will help you build up your vocabulary, exposing you to “fresh” approaches to writing sentences and enlightening you with how others string their ideas together. After all this reading, you will be better able to express yourself using your own words, and move away from clichés and idiomatic expressions. When you are able to do this, you will find



When you are able to do this, you will find

that your essay sounds more original, your letter creates more impact and your resume just may land you that job you are aiming for.



ACTIVITY 5.2

Read the sub-topic on Creative Writing again, either on your own or in a group. Reflect and discuss in what way this sub-topic is written a little differently from the rest.

5.4 BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND PLAGIARISM

In this section, we will discuss the following:

- Bibliographies; and
- Plagiarism

5.4.1 Bibliographies

According to WordNet of Princeton University, **bibliography** is a *list of writings with time and place of publication (such as the writings of a single author or the works referred to) in preparing a document etc.* So when you do research and borrow ideas from books, magazines, newspapers, websites, journals, films and others, you must give credit to the source where your idea came from and include a list of bibliographies in your report in order to avoid accusations of plagiarism.

We will discuss plagiarism later. There are two popular ways of writing bibliographies, namely, MLA and APA. The MLA documentation style is recommended by the *Modern Language Association* and is widely used in fields like the humanities, history, literature, rhetoric and communication. The APA documentation style, on the other hand, is recommended by the *American Psychological Association* and is widely used in the social sciences.

Both citation styles include **In-text Citations** and **Works Cited Page**. In-text Citation simply means documenting your sources within your paper for immediate view, while Works Cited Page means the last page of your paper that list all the sources you cited.

The following describes how you could make in-text citations and bibliography entries based on the MLA style:

In-text citations

Citations should be placed directly after a quotation from another source, or a reference to intellectual property owned by others.

Books, Magazines, Newspapers, Journals:

- 1 author: (Last name, Page)
- 2 authors: (Last name and Last name, Page)
- 3 authors: (Last name, Last name and Last name, Page)
- 4+ authors: (Last name et al)

Encyclopedia:

- any authors: (Encyclopedia Name)

Bibliography entries:

At the end of your paper, you should include a page with a listing of all the sources you have used and referenced in your work.

- Book:** Last name, First name. Title. City: Publisher, Year.
- Magazine:** Last name, First name. "Title of Article." Title of Magazine Date published: page numbers.
- Newspaper:** Last name, First name. "Title of Article." Title of Newspaper [City] Date Published, Edition, Section: page numbers.
- Website:** Last name, First name. "Title of Page." Title of Site. Editor. Date and/or version no. Date of access <URL>.
- Journal:** Last name, First name. "Title of Article." Title of Journal Volume number. Issue number (Year): page numbers.

The APA style of making in-text citations and bibliography entries is a little different:

In-text citations

Citations should be placed directly after any quotation from another source, or a reference to intellectual property owned by others.

All Sources:

- 1 author: (Last name, Year)
- 2 authors: (Last name & Last name, Year)
- 3 authors: (Last name, Last name & Last name, Year)
- 4+ authors: (Last name et al., Year)

Magazine or Newspaper:

- No authors: ("Article title", Year)

Note: for direct quotes add page numbers: (Last name, year, p. #)

Bibliography entries:

At the end of your paper, you should also include a page with listing of all the sources you used and referenced in your work.

- Book:** Last name, F. (Year). *Title*. City: Publisher.
- Magazine:** Last name, F. (Date published). Title of Article. *Title of Magazine*, Volume, page numbers.
- Newspaper:** Last name, F. (Date published). Title of Article. *Title of Newspaper*, volume, page numbers.
- Website:** Last name, F. (Date published). *Title of Website/Article*. Retrieved Date, from URL
- Journal:** Last name, F. (Year). Title of Article. *Title of Journal*, volume(issue), page numbers.

While it is good to know how to write your citation manually, in this electronic age there are plenty of websites that can help you build your citation automatically just by entering the ISBN number or title of a book, URL etc.

One of the websites you can visit is *www.bibme.com*. Another one is *www.easybib.com*. You can look around on the Internet to find one that suits you. Samples of bibliographies can be seen at the end of every topic in this module.

5.4.2 Plagiarism

Plagiarising is considered a serious crime since it is actually stealing someone else's ideas or words and claiming them to be your own.

A definition of "*plagiarism*" taken from *www.plagiarism.org* quoted the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary; to "*plagiarise*" means:

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

This same website *www.plagiarism.org* goes on to explain what is meant by plagiarism:

- Turning in someone else's work as your own;
- Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit;
- Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks;
- Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation;
- Changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit; and
- Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not.

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

Students, as new writers and researchers, should take plagiarism seriously and refrain from copying and pasting information from websites and e-documents without proper citation. They should also avoid taking paragraphs or passages from other sources, and inserting them into their own essay or research paper, and claiming all these to be their own.

5.5 SCREENING FOR USEFUL RESOURCES

One way to quickly screen through piles of resources such as books, journal articles and websites when doing research for an essay or report is to read the abstract or précis. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary; **abstract** means *a summary of points (as of a writing) usually presented in skeletal form* whilst **précis**, originating from a French word, means *a concise summary of essential points, statements or facts*. While both words seem to have similar meaning, many take **abstract** as the summary done by the author and **précis** is the summary of an abstract rewritten using your own words.

Another way to quickly screen materials and resources to see its' relevance is by reading the **introduction** of a book or an essay. When reading the introduction, be on a look out for what is known as “*stages*”. The three stages found in an introduction are:

- (a) The topic sentence – a general statement about the essay.
- (b) Supporting details – explanation, definition or description of subject matter.
- (c) Preview or scope – what is to come or what the topic is going to cover.

Utilising these methods will help you save a lot of time screening through materials for your essay or research.

5.6 DESCRIBING VISUAL DATA

Visual data such as charts and graphs are common in essays, especially those in scientific research papers. You need to familiarise yourself with words used in this type of essay and learn how to interpret charts and graphs. In order to do this, you should start reading essays and articles featuring them. The easiest way to do this is to *google* “interpreting charts and graphs” and look through the websites listed, so as to find out more about how charts and graphs are interpreted. Some websites provide activities that you can participate in to practise these skills.

The most common types of graphic aids normally found in academic writing include the following:

- (a) Tables
- (b) Line graphs
- (c) Bar charts
- (d) Pictographs
- (e) Pie charts

**ACTIVITY 5.3**

Instructions:

Read the verbs below. They are often used to describe changes in line graphs. Look up the meanings of the verbs and answer the questions that follow.

- (a) Plummet
- (b) Increase
- (c) Peak
- (d) Soar
- (e) Rocket
- (f) Fluctuate
- (g) Level out
- (h) Drop
- (i) Decredase
- (j) Decline
- (k) Rise
- (l) Fall

Questions:

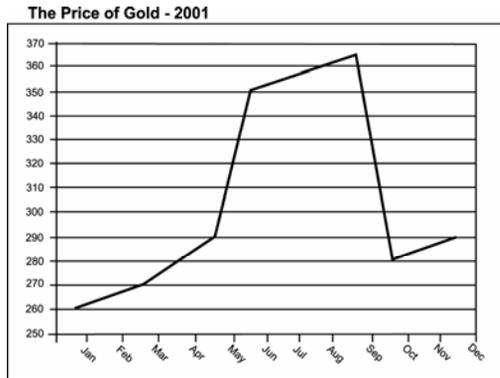
- (a) Which five verbs mean “go up”?
- (b) Which three verbs “go up suddenly/a lot”?
- (c) Which five verbs mean “go down”?
- (d) Which verb means “stay the same”?
- (e) Which verb means “go up and down”?



ACTIVITY 5.4

The line graph shows the movement in the price of gold in the year 2001. Study it carefully and fill in the blanks in the text below, using the words provided in the box.

marginally slightly steadily sharply gradually



The price of gold rose _____(i) during the first quarter from its turn-of-the-year price (RM255 per ounce) but turned up _____(ii) towards the end of June and continued to climb until the end of the third quarter, when it fell _____(iii).

However, it picked up _____(iv) again in November and December and is expected to rise _____(v) in the New Year.

SUMMARY

- This topic introduces a few tools needed to handle essay writing.
- A paragraph is made up of a topic sentence, supporting sentence/s and a concluding sentence.
- A multi-part essay question may have several questions subsumed within it.
- Creative writing does not always follow the rigid rules, forms or outlines commonly found in academic writing.
- When you borrow ideas from books, magazines, newspapers, websites, journals and films, you must give credit to the source by citing it in your bibliography.

- There are two popular ways of writing bibliographies – the MLA and the APA style.
- Plagiarising is a serious crime as it refers to stealing someone else’s ideas or words and claiming them to be your own.
- Writers need to be careful to avoid plagiarism
- Visual cues such as charts and graphs are often used in essays, especially in scientific research papers.

KEY TERMS

Abstract	Plagiarism
Bibliography	Précis
Concluding sentence	Supporting sentence
Creative writing	Topic sentence
Essay	Visual cues
Paragraph	



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- It clearly describes the processes of collaborative writing (the invention stage, drafting stage and revision stage), the rules and procedures for the project, plans for completing the project, and project management.

KEY TERMS

Blended model	Invention stage
Chunk model	Revision stage
Collaborative writing	Style/format
Compiler model	Task analysis
Conflict management	Team building
Drafting stage	Team communication



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MODULE FEEDBACK
<i>MAKLUM BALAS MODUL</i>

Should you have any comment or feedback, you are welcomed to:

1. E-mail your comment or feedback to modulefeedback@oum.edu.my

OR

2. Download and fill up the feedback questionnaire from
URL: <http://lms.oum.edu.my/> via myLMS
and
e-mail to modulefeedback@oum.edu.my

Thank you.

Centre for Instructional Design and Technology
(*Pusat Reka Bentuk Pengajaran dan Teknologi*)

Tel No.: 03-27732273

Fax No.: 03-26978702