

HOW TO WRITE THE COURSE ESSAY

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Preliminary Stage

- **Definition:** A piece of writing with no more than ten pages (12pp letter-size double space).
 - **May add an appendix with tables, graphs, or other complementary information (statistics, the layout of model estimations)**
- Remember that there is a difference between spoken and written communication, so you must select your words carefully to make your intention as straightforward as possible.
- Any emphasis has to be done through vocabulary (sentence rhythm or punctuation).

Second Stage

- **Identifying a research question or problem:** Make explicit the assumptions behind the question and the implications that arise from the question's statement or assumptions.
- **Keywords:** Look for the vital words or sentences that will determine the structure of the answer you will write.

Remember that those keywords have important implications on the validity of the essay.

Frequent verbs used in essay questions: Compare, Test, Define, Describe, Criticise, Discuss, Evaluate, Explain, Illustrate, Interpret, Justify, Outline, Relate, Review, State, Summarise, Trace.

Third Stage

Gathering Information

- **Preliminary thinking:** Examine the essay topic and formulate a set of basic questions before starting to read.
- **Browse through sources:** To get ideas and see what others have said about the topic (we find new ideas only when we have some framework which allows us to see their significance).
 - Type the research question in Google Academic and review the most cited papers on the field.
 - It will be useful to search again once the topic is better defined.
- **Organise the ideas:** Planning an outline for the essay gives a basic structure to work and helps to sort out the main concepts and details needed to develop its personal ideas.

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Selecting the Information

- Think hard about the **relevance of the information** you have chosen (It is not a good idea to include all the information found in your search.)

- **Evaluate the information:** There are some basic questions that the author should ask when evaluating sources (books, periodicals or Web sites):
 - Age: Publication date or last update (Web site)
 - Credibility and accuracy: Author, publisher or creator (Web site). Newspapers tend not to be very accurate, and use journals or reports of reputed institutions. Check the original data at the source (avoid second hands tables or graphics).

Fourth Stage

Planning the Essay Outline

- The first step must be to organise the ideas and draw up a plan in order to keep control of the essay and introduce the subject in a logical, concise and coherent way.
- **Basic Framework**
 - An essay should include these three parts:

1. Introduction

- a. (Approximately 10-15% of the total length or one page or less): should contain the preliminary comments on the topic and the current state (you should clarify which aspects of the topic you want to deal with and why).

2. The Body of the Essay

For an applied topic, the paragraphs may be:

1. Model
2. Results
3. Discussion of the main results
4. Policy implication

3. Conclusion

- b) (10-15% of total length, frequently just two or three paragraphs, about one page or less): summarise the original main ideas and might be appropriate to provide a tentative answer to the question.
- c) Highlight the added value of the paper and the main original results

Fifth Stage

Writing the Essay

- **Style:** It is much better to use simple and straightforward language. Use complex (technical) words and sentences only if it is absolutely necessary. Avoid slang and abbreviations (not previously described) and any reliance on other forms of communication we can use when speaking. Stick to short sentences.

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→ The main objective is to be clear and concise to let the reader follow the reasoning easily and not get distracted by irrelevant padding.

- **Layout:** Once the topic has been presented, the author must decide what each paragraph is about

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- 1) What diagrams are needed, and where should they be placed?
- 2) How must the paragraphs be organised in a logical sequence?
- 3) Would sub-headings help the reader?

- **Paragraphs:** Ensure that each paragraph has unity and links naturally with the previous and following paragraphs.

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- A paragraph typically deals with one issue.
- Two paragraphs may be on different issues but linked by that difference.
- Often, the first sentence of the paragraph is the most important (it explains what the paragraph is about).

- **Transition:** It is essential to maintain continuity and to give verbal signposts to the reader showing how the story is moving on by using linking words:



- **Indicating Contrast** (but, however, although, yet)
- **Indicating Illustration** (for example, that is)
- **Indicating Extension** (similarly, moreover, furthermore)
- **Indicating Conclusion** (therefore, consequently, as a result, thus)
- **Indicating the Next Step** (then, after that, ultimately, eventually)

- **Bibliography or References:** At the end of the essay, the author should give a simple list of the publications the author has consulted and used.
 - If read but no idea or data are latter used in the text, it is not needed to quote.

If appropriate, also list the people and organisations the author have contacted. The latter is useful to the reader and later on when you should check back on specific points, but also, to give credibility to these sources.





DON'T PLAGIARIZE: Plagiarism, which is using other authors' words without acknowledgment, is something that must be avoided when writing an essay. If using direct quotations, always indicate it in a footnote **or (author, year, page); and do not forget to include the source in the reference list at the end of the paper) with a precise reference to the source of that quotation. Plagiarism invalidates the essay.**

How do I add Google Scholar to Chrome? web store, click on:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/google-scholar-button/ldipcbpaocekfooobnbcddclnhejkcpn?hl=es>

How do I add Google Scholar to Chrome? Step by step:

1. *Step 1: Navigate to Google Chrome. You'll find it on your taskbar toward the bottom of your screen.*
2. *Step 2: Navigate to the Chrome Web Store. ...*
3. *Step 4: Click on the "Google Scholar Button" extension. ...*
4. *Step 5: Click on the "Add to Chrome" button. ...*
5. *Step 6: Click the "Add extension" button.*

- **The Review:** Is very useful to use a review checklist to see if you have gone through all the necessary processes in the preparation of your essay:
 - 1) Have I answered the particular question that was originally set?
 - 2) Have I divided up the question into separate questions and answered to them?
 - 3) Have I gone through all the main aspects?
 - 4) Have I done it properly?
 - 5) Is the content relevant?
 - 6) Is the content accurate?
 - 7) Have I arranged the material logically?
 - 8) Does the reader move smoothly from one section to the next, from paragraph to paragraph?
 - 9) Is each point supported by examples and reasons?
 - 10) Have I acknowledged all sources and references?
 - 11) Have I distinguished clearly between mine and others' ideas?
 - 12) Has the essay the right length?

- 13) Have I written plainly and clearly?
- 14) Is the grammar, punctuation and spelling acceptable?
- 15) Have I presented a convincing case which I could justify in a discussion?