# Essay writing

## What is an essay?

An essay (or response) is a short piece of writing.

Essays are used to develop and expand ideas or arguments and include supporting evidence. In high school, students are given a question which they must develop an answer for in essay form.

Typical school essays include:

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| DISCUSSION | A discussion often consists of both sides of an argument being considered. Information and opinions about more than one side of an issue must be presented. | Statement of issue (thesis): introduces issue and position to be argued. Arguments: series of paragraphs arguing for and against the issue. Recommendation or summary. | - Present tense.  
- Use of words that contrast arguments eg however, nevertheless, in contrast, on the other hand.  
- Actions (verbs) are often changed into things (nouns). eg explore → exploration; recite → recitation; we have considered → after consideration of.  
- Use of words that qualify eg usually, probably, may, often. |
| EXPOSITION | To persuade by arguing one side of an issue eg letter to the editor. | Statement of position (thesis): introduces issue and position to be argued. Arguments: one paragraph for each argument or point. Reinforcement of thesis and recommendation. | - Most of the text is written in present tense.  
- Use of words that link arguments eg in addition, moreover.  
- Actions (verbs) are often changed into things (nouns). eg explore → exploration; recite → recitation; we have considered → after consideration of.  
- Use of words that qualify eg usually, probably, may, often. |
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| CRITICAL ANALYSIS    | To demonstrate an understanding of the ideas expressed in a text.            | **Statement of meaning:** introduces ideas about the central meaning(s) of the text. | - Several paragraphs may need to be written about one or more aspects of the text.  
                           |                                                                              | **Review:** one paragraph for each aspect of the text, including theme/meaning, structure, tone, language use, imagery and symbolism. | - Evidence, such as full quotations from the text, should be included to support the writer’s point of view.  
                           |                                                                              | **Conclusion:** remind the reader of the key points.                       | - Use linking words at the beginning of paragraphs eg *moreover, in addition, another, furthermore*.  
                           |                                                                              |                                                                           | - Write in the third person – avoid the use of ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘my’.          |
| COMPARE AND CONTRAST | To compare and contrast two texts.                                            | **Statement of position (thesis):** introduces the key similarities and/or differences. | - Don’t simply retell or recount – show how the texts are similar or different.  
                           |                                                                              | **Observations:** one paragraph for each key similarity/difference.         | - Include direct references to the text.  
<pre><code>                       |                                                                              | **Conclusion:** final analysis and reaffirmation of the thesis.             | - Use connecting words at the beginning of paragraphs to clearly indicate similarities or differences eg *in contrast, alternatively, similarly, on the other hand*.  |
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| REVIEW | To personally evaluate the quality of a book, film, play or website etc and to judge the effectiveness of the text to either inform, entertain or persuade a particular audience. | **Title:** an eye-catching heading to attract the reader’s attention. The heading may be a pun on the title of the work being reviewed.  
**Context:** a paragraph identifying the work and important details, such as the name of the director/author, actors and publisher.  
**Text synopsis:** a series of paragraphs that provides a selective summary of the content of the text. Main events are outlined and major characters are introduced.  
**Judgment:** a final paragraph (or two) which summarises the reviewer’s opinion of the text. |  
- Most of the text should be written in present tense.  
- First person eg *I/my* may be used.  
- Descriptive language for characters, setting and events, and the making or production of the text.  
- A plot summary which doesn’t reveal the ending or surprise elements of the work.  
- A discussion of the author, director, designer or actors.  
- Use of technical and topical words, such as:  
  - Film – director, viewer, script, dialogue, special effect, lighting, scenery, actors.  
  - Book – incident, novel, author, setting, main characters, language, chapters.  
  - Website – links, surfing, scrolling, URL, pop-ups, portal, purpose, author/producer/designer, colour, graphics, functionality, content.  
- A recommendation for the audience to view, read or listen to the text. |