

# LIPA

Learning Services

## Essay Writing

### The Stages In Writing An Essay



**Analysing the question:** A common fault in essay writing is **failure to answer the question**. Questions are usually phrased to limit topics to a specific aspect, so remember to analyse the question to discover exactly what is required.

Below are some explanations of terms which are often found in essay questions:

**Analyse:** Break down an issue/subject into its component parts, discuss them and show how they interrelate

**Argue:** Make a case for based on your evidence using a for or an against point of view

**Discuss:** A bit vague could mean describe and summarise but you should also analyse and assess as well.

**Evaluate:** consider the value or importance of something paying attention to positive and negative aspects and citing any known authorities opinions as well as your own.

**Illustrate:** Similar to explain but probably asking for specific examples or statistics, or case studies

**Outline:** Indicate the main features of a topic or sequence of events, setting them where possible within a clear structure or framework to show how they interrelate.

**Review:** Survey a topic, but the emphasis is on Assessing not just describing

All these terms are looking for you to go through the process of selection, providing evidence and critical evaluation not just descriptions or explanations

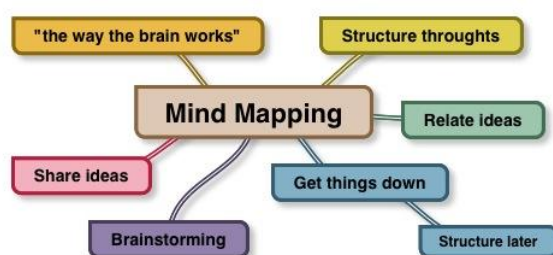
Your tutor is giving clues to how they wish the essay to be tackled through the formation of the question.....Don't ignore the clues!

*Writing Down Your Initial Ideas:* Write down what you already know, or any ideas you have about how to answer the question.

*Finding Relevant Information:* Carry out a literature search.

### Selecting and Organising Ideas In An Essay Plan:

- Go through the ideas you have written down
- Decide which are the **main points**
- Decide which are **subsidiary points**, and to which main points they relate
- Decide on any **examples** or **illustrations** which will support your points
- Decide how you are going to **organise** them.
- Use a mind map and key words or phrases to produce an essay outline.



## Writing Your Essay

*Do follow your plan, ensure you order your material in a logical way, make paragraph divisions significant as these act as crucial “sign-posts” to the reader.*



**The Introduction** should state how you interpret the question and how you propose to answer it. Keep it short and to the point. Aim to indicate what will follow, what your approach will be and what you intend to achieve. Remember the Introduction creates the initial impression of the whole of your essay!

**The Main Body** of the essay is the part that gives the facts and arguments raised by the question with evidence and examples to support them. Ensure that each paragraph flows smoothly into the other. This can be achieved by using linking words. (e.g. First, Secondly, As a result, However) Support each main opinion or statement with evidence, examples, quotations and provide references to your sources. Avoid simple narration - present the evidence or primary material, make your comments, draw your conclusion.

**The Conclusion** draws together the arguments to show the final conclusions you have reached in answering the question. It should be short, and should be supported by the discussion in the main body of the essay. Avoid simply repeating the points made in your introduction.

**The Bibliography** is a list of information sources you have used for the essay. (see separate sheet on Referencing and Bibliographies!)

### Pit Falls

- Failing to comprehend the requirements of the question and to structure the answer accordingly.
- Ignoring vital aspects of the question and wandering into irrelevance.
- Recounting or narrating material in a continuous flow without analysing or commenting on it.
- Failing to pursue a coherent line of thought and to organise material logically.

### Criteria of good essay writing

- Have you answered the question in the title?
- Have you drawn on relevant and varied sources?
- Do you show a good grasp of the main ideas?
- Have you presented a coherent argument?
- Is it written in an objective analytical style with appropriate use of evidence?
- Is it well written? (ie. Easy to read, clear etc.)

