



HLS
EAL Training & Consultancy

**HOUNSLOW
LANGUAGE
SERVICE**



**Supporting Advanced EAL
Learners at KS5 with Essay
Writing Skills**

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ESSAY WRITING (1)

Why write essays?

It may help you to come to terms with the problems involved in writing essays if you are clear about what they are meant to achieve. Here are some reasons for writing essays.

1. They make you go through your notes and take possession of them – i.e. you understand them more thoroughly when you have been through the process of selecting and reshaping material for an essay.
2. They give you practice in the crucial skill of expressing your ideas on paper with clarity and persuasiveness. However good you may be at putting a point in a discussion in class, since most examinations consist of written answers, and language is used differently in writing than it is in speaking, you need to practise essay writing. With such practice you become more competent in expressing your ideas clearly, economically, with appropriate illustrations, in appropriate sequence and at a suitable length.
3. Essays provide a way for you and your teachers to measure your progress and identify both strengths (which are encouraging) and weaknesses (which can only be improved if they have first been spotlighted).
4. Essays provide useful material for future examination revision.
5. Essays written during some courses represent course-work which is taken into account in deciding your examination grade.

What Examiners say

If you still need to be convinced that you need to practise the skills involved in writing competent essays, you might consider the fact that the reports which examiners issue each year after marking candidates' work regularly draw attention to poor essay technique as a cause of poor achievement by examinees. The kinds of specific criticisms that are made include the following:

- Students failed to understand what the question was asking for, and to organise their answers accordingly.
- Students failed to take sufficient account of key instructions like 'discuss', 'criticise', 'illustrate', 'compare', etc.
- Students ignored vital aspects of the question or wandered off into irrelevance.
- Students failed to offer sufficient supporting evidence for the case they were arguing.
- Students failed to pursue a coherent line of thought and organise material logically, i.e. essays were poorly planned or appeared to consist of undigested notes.

Faults like these can be found in examination essays at most levels and in the majority of subjects. Avoiding such pitfalls is crucial to success in an examination course.

ESSAY WRITING (2)

Procedure and Command Words

To clarify what is meant by procedure- or command - words, consider the following essay title: *Account for the growth of the microelectronics industry in Japan.*

(Don't worry if you have not the vaguest idea about Japanese industries – the point of this exercise is to analyse what questions demand and how they should be approached, not actually to write particular essays.)

The crucial first step in analysing this question is to separate out

- (a) the words in the question which indicate what kind of factual material needs to be put into the answer and
- (b) the words in the question which tell you how to handle this factual content – i.e. the procedure words.

The table below indicates these two distinct kinds of words:

PROCEDURE WORD	FACTUAL CONTENT WORDS
account for	growth micro-electronics industry Japan

It is the procedure words which we are concerned with here - those cues in an essay question which specify how you should approach the facts, how you should handle them in your answer. However extensive your grasp of the facts about the growth of microelectronics in Japan, you will receive little credit for your knowledge unless you present it in the way the procedure words in the essay specify. To clarify this point, consider what a wide range of ways there are of handling these facts. For example, you might

- (a) list in date order the main stages in the development of the Japanese microelectronics industry;
- (b) specify precisely which sectors of Japanese industry made most use of microelectronics, and how this use developed;
- (c) illustrate the main kinds of products involving microelectronics which were exported on an increasing scale from Japan;
- (d) contrast the expansion of the Japanese microelectronics industry with developments elsewhere in the world.

All these approaches would allow you to show your knowledge of the facts about the growth of the Japanese micro-electronics industry, but that is not enough: the essay title requires you specifically to account for this growth – in other words to explain the reasons why the microelectronics industry grew. In other words, you have to pay close attention to the 'procedure words', just as you have to pay close attention to the words in the question which specify the factual content of your answer. Missing out either of these steps is liable to produce an irrelevant or seriously weak answer.

It is important therefore, that you are clear in your own mind about what the standard 'procedure words' in essay titles actually require you to do. To check your understanding of these words, read through the list that follows keeping a piece of paper over the right-hand column where the words are explained. Think out your own definition for each of the listed procedure words, and only then check it against the explanation. If you find your definitions are widely different from the one given, make a note of the appropriate procedure words and their definitions for your future reference.

ACCOUNT FOR	Explain the reasons for, giving an indication of all the relevant factors which explain something. This is quite different from 'Give an account of', which invites only a detailed description.
ANALYSE	Study in depth, identifying and describing in detail all the main features.
ASSESS	Examine something closely, with a view to weighing it up in a balanced way, taking notice of strengths and weaknesses and arguments pro and con. Offer a clear judgement on the matter in conclusion.
COMMENT	State your opinions on the matter in question, supporting your views with appropriate evidence or explanations.
COMPARE	Specify ways in which two or more things resemble one another. It is insufficient merely to write separate descriptions of these things: stress the similarities, but differences should also be noted.
CONTRAST	Stress the dissimilarities between the items in question; here again, difference must be clearly specified, and while the main emphasis falls on such difference, points of similarity should not be ignored.
CRITICISE	Express your judgement on the merit or truth of the material in question, paying attention both to strengths and weaknesses.
DEFINE	Offer clear, concise meanings.
DISCUSS	Examine and analyse carefully, giving reasons for and against, setting out advantages and disadvantages. Consider all sides of an issue and reach a balanced conclusion.
ENUMERATE	State in list or outline form, giving points concisely one by one.
EVALUATE	Judge the value of the item in question, referring both to its positive and negative features; offer appropriate evidence in support of the points you make pro and con.
EXPLAIN	Clarify and interpret the material you are dealing with; offer reasons; analyse causes.



HLS
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For further information or booking
please contact Rehana Ahmed:
Lampton School
Lampton Avenue
Hounslow TW3 4EP

Tel 0208 538 1802

Fax: 0208 538 1803

E-mail: rehana.ahmed@ealhls.org.uk

Website: www.ealhls.org.uk

If you would like more information, please contact us.

વધારે માહિતી માટે મહેરબાની કરીને અમોને મળો.

যদি আপনার আরোও কিছু জানার থাকে, তাহলে আমাদের যোগাযোগ করুন।

Se precisar de mais informações, contacte-nos.

若你需要更多資料，請與我們聯絡。

اگر آپ کو مزید معلومات دیکار ہیں تو ہم سے رابطہ قائم کریں

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Nëse dëshironi më shumë informata, ju lutemi kontaktoni qendrën tonë.

Haddi aad faahfaahin u baahantay fadlan nala soo xidhiidh.