

Eeva's essay-writing guidance

Essay writing is a skill, and it takes practice to do it well. Here are some guidelines for achieving good results without too much heart-ache.

General points:

- Do what you have been asked to do. Usually this means answering a question. As you write, stop from time to time to think about whether you are still on topic.
- Even if you are not making a grand theoretical point, your essay should have a message, and it should be made clear to the reader.
- Putting the same thing differently, your text should make a case and provide evidence for it. It should also demonstrate that you are aware of alternative interpretations and arguments, in other words, that you can think critically.
- A good essay will present a well-organized argument.
- It will include references to the literature that you have cited. The reference list will demonstrate that you are familiar with the main academic texts informing the assignment and, if there is a case study, it will point the reader to one or two key texts about that.
- Do **NOT** copy and paste from online or other sources. That is plagiarism.

The process:

- It is a good idea to start by writing an essay plan. As you do this, think about the keywords and central concepts that you want the reader to grasp.
- Begin your essay with a short introduction that says what the general topic of the text is and how you will approach it.
- Where appropriate, illustrate your essay with empirical examples from the literature, from the media or your own experience.
- Do not spend too much time on definitions. Sometimes it is appropriate and helpful to tell the reader about how you are using a particular term and how this might differ from other possibilities, but giving definitions can become tedious as well as pointless.
- Think about your reader. Be clear, and do not leave the reader to guess at what you mean.
- You can use subheadings to give structure to the essay and guidance to the reader.
- Do not over-generalise or exaggerate and do not use moralising language.
- List sources as you would in an academic journal or book. Usually you do not need more than a few references. Format your references systematically.
- Do **not** copy text from electronic sources without attributing it! Websites and other media sources **must** be fully acknowledged and quoted text placed inside quotation marks ("..."). Include the date they were accessed in the references.
- If possible, do a spell-check and perhaps even a grammar-check. Check the correct spellings of authors!

The more you read, the more fun you will have writing. The more you write, the easier it becomes.