



STUDENT NOTES FOR SUCCESS

No 7

Essay writing

Essays must provide the reader with a clear direction regarding the discussion. Therefore providing a proposition or thesis statement ensures that you have an argument/point of view to focus the discussion on throughout your essay.

Getting it right: answer the right question!

It is imperative that you answer the question asked in your assignment.



Example:

What are the reasons for staffing problems in the Australian hotel and catering industry? Suggest ways in which these might be overcome.

One suggested method for analysing the question (Williams, 1995) includes the following steps:

1. **Identify the subject** (staffing problems)
2. **Identify the instruction** What does the question ask you to do? (name/list/describe the problems, suggest possible solutions)
3. **Identify the key aspects** (reasons for problems, how problems might be overcome)
4. **Identify significant words** ("suggest ways... might be overcome"). This hints that there is no easy, straightforward solution.
5. **Ask yourself questions about the question** Why are there problems? What sorts of problems? Are the problems the same across the industry or do they vary, for example, for large and small hotels/restaurants? What is the scope of the essay (hotel and catering industry, Australia)?

Search for Evidence

How to analyse the question: example

Identify the <u>reasons</u> for	<u>Subject</u>
<u>staffing problems</u> within	<u>Instruction</u>
the <u>hotel and catering</u>	<u>Key aspects</u>
industry. <u>Suggest</u> ways	<u>Significant words</u>
these might be <u>overcome.</u>	

(Williams 1999)

Research your topic after you have clarified the essay question. Make active reading notes from helpful journal articles. Use both paraphrased information and quoted information in your notes. Take down all the bibliographical details for reference. When you take down direct quotes you may want to use, be sure to note the page number as well. Use the Chicago referencing style both in-text and in your reference list. Making good notes from your readings will give you a sound base from which to begin.

Let's Begin

Know the direction your essay will take before you begin. Think of yourself as a tour-director who writes a self-guided walk for a tourist. Tell the tourist what to look out for on his walk and point out major signposts. Write a quick 'skeleton' starting with your proposition statement, and then a topic sentence to signify each paragraph which will follow. Such an outline will help organise and guide your work, so that it stays on topic.



Introduction

An introduction normally contains good background information. The essay's introduction should therefore have a few sentences setting out the background or the current situation of the topic to be discussed. You then need to indicate the approach you are going to take in a 'proposition' statement: that is, what you are specifically going to discuss, examine or argue and what evidence you intend to provide. It is not uncommon, however, for people to write their introduction after they have written the bulk of their essay, particularly if they are having trouble getting started.

Proposition or thesis

Your proposition statement is the most important sentence in your essay. It sets out what you are going to do and what position you are taking in the essay. Not only does the proposition give *you* direction, but it also gives *the reader* direction.



Example:

This essay will explore the impact of a range of staffing problems on the hospitality and catering industry and suggest some possible solutions.

Each paragraph you write must add to, or be related to, your proposition in some way and should propel the argument forward.

Body

Each paragraph should:

- discuss one main idea;
- have a topic sentence that relates to the proposition statement in some way;
- have internal organisation (paragraphs need to define, describe, explain, give examples, analyse and conclude a particular aspect of the essay topic); and
- be clearly and logically linked to the preceding and/or following paragraphs with appropriate connecting expressions such as: As a result.....; Another key aspect of this question is.....

Critically Analyse and Evaluate

Your essay discussion should evaluate and analyse the information from journal articles and other sources you have consulted. Reading material is used as evidence to promote *your own* ideas - your 'voice' within the essay. All references used must be acknowledged in the text as well as in the reference list to avoid plagiarism. All direct quotes should be indicated with inverted commas ("...") and should have a page number, as well as author and year (for example: Jones 2004, 14).

Conclusion

The conclusion summarises the findings of the essay, that is, the main points and the results. Although it does not introduce new information, the conclusion can look at the consequences and/or impact on the future.

Proofreading and Editing

Of course, it goes without saying that all essays must be carefully proofread and edited for content, structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and referencing. Allow time to revise well between drafts. Read the final draft aloud to pick up any remaining errors.

Williams, K. 1995. *Writing essays*. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Find out more at the CBS Academic Communication Development website:
<https://businesslaw.curtin.edu.au/study/student-experience/academic-communication-development/>

You might also be interested in *Handy Handout 16. The Power of Introductions*.

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