

A Student's Guide to Essay Writing

The guide below is by no means definitive. Rather, if you are the type to study five minutes before your GP exam, keep these points in mind.

The introduction

- Have a hook at the start. A quote, anecdote, anything. Teachers, like us, don't like to read boring stuff, too.
- You should define or explain key terms.
- The issue at hand must be introduced as the heart of your discussion.
- Don't use more words than needed. Present your stand and arguments clearly.

The body

- Writing the body of an essay is like trying to eat a banana - PEEL carefully. Point, Elaboration, Example, Link (for the uninitiated). As all these components are interlinked, you need to show clear connections, e.g. between Elaboration and Example.
- Your paragraphs shouldn't be example-driven, but driven rather by your arguments and points.
- Check that you are coherent throughout so you don't slip up, or sound silly because you keep contradicting yourself.
- It's not always a history essay, so do have current and relevant examples.
- If you're lacking in scope, think of SPECTRAM (Social, Political, Economic, Cultural, Technological, Race & Religion, Aesthetic, Moral).
- Express what you want to convey, nothing more or less. Don't drag, or your essay will be a drag to read.
- For the romantically inclined, remember "KISS". It means "keep it short & simple." "Keep it short, stupid!" works as well.

The conclusion

- To continue with my fruit analogy, the conclusion is like the cherry on top of a good essay - which will hopefully be yours. Don't neglect it.
- Restate your stand concisely. Please don't copy and paste your thesis statement.
- Don't introduce new content in your conclusion - that belongs to your content paragraphs.
- Where applicable, provide an insight into the issue at hand. Remember, though, that it is infinitely better to end normally, than to cough out a half-baked opinion.

