

Lecture 02

2.1 What is an Essay?

An essay is a written piece of prose that presents and explores a focused topic or argument in a structured and coherent manner. It typically includes an introduction that introduces the topic and thesis statement, body paragraphs that provide evidence, analysis, and discussion of the main points, and a conclusion that summarizes the key arguments and potentially offers insights or recommendations. Essays serve various purposes, such as conveying information, expressing opinions, persuading readers, or analyzing a subject, and they can vary in length and style depending on their intended audience and purpose.

2.2 Characteristics of an Essay

All essays are generally considered to have facts, statistics, cohesion, coherence and citations which are discussed in detail as follows.

2.2.1 Cohesion

Cohesion in an essay refers to the logical and smooth flow of ideas and information throughout the text. Achieving cohesion involves using appropriate transition words and phrases to connect sentences and paragraphs, ensuring that readers can follow the argument or narrative without confusion. This helps maintain the essay's clarity and readability.

2.2.2 Coherence

Coherence, on the other hand, pertains to the overall unity and consistency of the essay. It involves organizing the content in a logical and orderly manner, with each paragraph and section contributing to the central theme or argument. Coherence ensures that the essay feels like a well-structured whole, making it easier for readers to understand and engage with the material.

2.2.3 Citations

Citations are essential in essays to provide proper attribution to the sources of information and ideas used. They serve as a way to validate the author's claims, offer credibility to the essay, and avoid plagiarism. Citations follow a specific style guide (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago) and typically include the author's name, publication date, and the source's title, among other details, depending on the style guide used.

2.2.4 Facts and Statistics

Facts and statistics are crucial for supporting arguments in an essay. They provide evidence and substantiate the author's claims, making the essay more persuasive and informative. It's

important to ensure that the facts and statistics are accurate, up-to-date, and relevant to the essay's topic, and they should be integrated seamlessly into the text to enhance the overall quality of the argument.

2.3 Significance of Essay

Essay writing is considered as an essential skills students and professionals whose significance can be assessed from the following set of traits.

2.3.1 Communication Skills

Essays play a vital role in developing strong communication skills. They require the writer to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and coherently, which enhances their ability to express themselves effectively. Additionally, essays help individuals refine their writing style, grammar, and vocabulary, enabling them to convey complex information to a broader audience, a skill that is valuable in both academic and professional contexts.

2.3.2 Evaluating Knowledge

Essays serve as a tool for individuals to evaluate their own knowledge and understanding of a subject. When crafting an essay, one must synthesize information and structure arguments, highlighting areas of strength and identifying gaps in their knowledge. This self-assessment encourages ongoing learning and improvement, as it prompts individuals to seek out and fill those knowledge gaps.

2.3.3 Develops Critical Thinking

Essay writing nurtures critical thinking skills by requiring individuals to analyze, interpret, and evaluate information. Writers must consider multiple perspectives, assess the quality of sources, and construct well-reasoned arguments. This process encourages individuals to think critically, question assumptions, and make informed judgments, skills that are valuable in problem-solving and decision-making.

2.3.4 Develops Research Skills

Essays often involve extensive research to gather relevant information and evidence to support the argument. This research process fosters research skills, including the ability to locate credible sources, synthesize information from various outlets, and cite sources appropriately. These research skills extend beyond academic contexts and can be applied to real-life scenarios, enabling individuals to make informed decisions based on reliable information.

2.3.5 Continuous Learning

Essays promote a culture of continuous learning. They encourage individuals to explore new topics and delve into subjects they may not have encountered before. Through the process of researching, writing, and revising essays, individuals can expand their knowledge and adapt to evolving information and ideas. Essays thus serve as a means of intellectual growth and a mechanism for staying informed in an ever-changing world.

2.4 Structure of an Essay

An essay is generally divided into three parts. Introduction, Body and Conclusion. Among these parts, Introduction and Conclusion are generally written in one paragraph each whereas, the body is generally written in more than one paragraphs. Each of these sections are discussed below:

2.4.1 Introduction

It is the first paragraph of an essay which generally begins with an **attention getter** also known as a **hook**. This attention getter is used to grab the attention of the audience. Some common examples of attention getter are given below:

Quote: Global Warming isn't a prediction. It is happening.

Question: "Have you ever wondered how a single degree rise in temperature can trigger catastrophic changes worldwide?"

Surprising Fact: Since the industrial revolution in 1700, the level of carbon dioxide on earth has increased by 34%

Anecdote: Imagine standing on the shores of a disappearing island, where families are forced to abandon their homes due to rising sea levels.

The attention getter is followed by a detailed **background information** to help readers understand the subject matter. The following sample provides an example of writing the background information on the topic of 'global warming':

“Industrialization has led to the emergence of various environmental problems. Of all these, global warming is the most dangerous Global warming refers to the gradual increase in the average temperature of earth. The threat is constantly increasing ... the world leaders have not been able to reach a consensus to deal with this issue. Global warming is caused by the burning of fossil fuels...This burning has increased carbondioxide...Furthermore, nuclear radiation and deforestation have made it worse...”

The background information is followed by clear and concise **thesis statement** stating the **purpose** and setting the **direction** of an essay. Thesis statement is based on a clear and concise sentence. It presents the main argument of the essay. It is particularly used for defining the scope of the essay and presenting a roadmap for the readers to follow while reading different paragraphs. It can also be considered as highlighting the theme of the essay. One important rule is that it is always written in the first paragraph of the essay.

In terms of the characteristics of a thesis statement, it acts as a guide for both readers and the writer. It creates coherence in the entire essay. It is the statement of the essay which requires analysis and facts to support it. Therefore, it is considered debatable.

Sample thesis statements are given below:

“Human activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, are the primary drivers of climate change, and urgent action is needed to mitigate its devastating effects”

“The implementation of inclusive education policies positively impacts students with disabilities by fostering a sense of belonging, improving academic outcomes, and promoting social integration”

“As technology continues to advance, the balance between individual privacy rights and national security concerns becomes increasingly complex, necessitating the reevaluation of surveillance practices”

“Universal healthcare, while facing implementation challenges, is essential for ensuring equitable access to quality medical services and reducing the financial burden on individuals and families”

2.4.2 Body

The body of an essay consists of more than one paragraph. Each paragraph is used to elaborate a specific aspect of a subject matter. It begins with a **topic sentence** presenting the main idea of that paragraph. Topic sentence is followed by **supporting details** which are credible and relevant such as quotations, facts, statistics, examples and data that support the topic sentence. The manner in which the supporting details are connected with the thesis statement reflects the critical thinking ability of a writer. **Conclusion** sentence reiterates the main idea of the paragraph and paves the way for the next argument. **Counterarguments** are optional but if you add these, ensure to strengthen your thesis statement with evidence to refute these counterarguments. Example body paragraph is given below:

“Firstly, the rising temperatures leading to global warming are supported by extensive scientific evidence, and their impact on ecosystems is already evident. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Earth's average surface temperature has increased by approximately 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. This warming trend is primarily attributed to the excessive emissions of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide (CO₂), resulting from human activities ...”

Another example of body paragraph with a counterargument is given below for reference:

“Some skeptics argue that natural climate variability is responsible for the observed temperature changes. However, it's crucial to note that the current rate of warming far exceeds natural variability and aligns closely with the levels of greenhouse gas emissions associated with human activities. While natural climate variability does play a role in Earth's climate patterns, the rapid and unprecedented rate of temperature increase over the last century cannot be explained by natural factors alone. Extensive research and climate modeling consistently demonstrate that the overwhelming cause of recent global warming is human-induced greenhouse gas emissions. This notion is supported by temperature data, atmospheric observations, and the distinct fingerprint of human activities on the composition of the atmosphere. As the effects of global warming

intensify, it is imperative to understand the profound consequences it has on ecosystems, biodiversity, and the delicate balance of our planet's natural systems”

2.4.3 Conclusion

It is generally the last paragraph of the essay which is used to provide the summary of main points discussed in detail within the essay. It is also used for restating the thesis statement in different words. No new information should be included within this paragraph. It is used to create a lasting impression on readers with thought-provoking question, call to action, broader implication of an argument. Sample conclusion paragraph is given below for reference:

“In conclusion, the irrefutable reality of global warming, driven predominantly by human actions, looms as a grave threat to our planet. The evidence presented, including rising temperatures, shifting climate patterns, and the dire consequences for ecosystems and human societies, underscores the urgency of our collective response. As we stand at this pivotal juncture, it is evident that global warming demands immediate and sustained efforts at local, national, and global levels. To secure a sustainable future for our planet, we must redouble our commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, embracing renewable energy, and preserving the delicate balance of our natural world. The fate of Earth and generations yet unborn rests in our hands, and it is our responsibility to act decisively and address the catastrophic implications of global warming”

2.4.4 Types of Essay

Essays are generally classified into following categories:

- Narrative Essay
- Descriptive Essay
- Expository Essay
- Definition Essay
- Process Essay
- Compare / Contrast Essay
- Argumentative Essay
- Persuasive Essay
- Cause & Effect Essay
- Critical Essay
- Narrative Essay

2.4.4.1 Narrative Essay

The type of essay which is used to tell a story or recount personal experience is known as narrative essay. This essay is recognized for developing creativity and imagination among writers. It involves the use of literary techniques such as dialogues, analogies, metaphors, alliteration etc. It is used to emotionally engage the readers, provide lessons learned from experience. It generally has a chronological structure. Introduction sets the scene, body paragraphs describe the events in order, conclusion reflects on the experience. Narrative can be written on topics such as:

My First Day at University, A Memorable Orientation Ceremony, A Trip that Changed My Life

2.4.4.2 Descriptive Essay

The type of essay which provides detailed, vivid and sensory description of person, place, object, event. In this essay, focus remains on the description of subject. It involves the use of descriptive adjectives such as beautiful, pristine etc and action verbs such as whisper, emerge, conquer. It also involves the spatial use of language. Descriptive essays can be written on topics such as:

Favorite Personality, Historical Site, Memorable Farewell Dinner

2.4.4.3 Expository Essay

The type of essay which is used to explain, analyze and clarify a topic is known as Expository Essay. It is used by writers to demonstrate knowledge and expertise. Personal opinion are not included in this essay. Focus remains on factual information to keep the essay neutral and impartial. Introduction presents the topic as the thesis statement. Body paragraphs consist of evidence and explanation in the form of facts, statistics and citing sources. Conclusion summarizes the main points. Expository essay can be written on topics such as Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Industries, Effect of Social Media on Academia, Importance of Renewable Energy Sources.

2.4.4.4 Definition Essay

The type of essay which is used to define a term, idea is known as definition essay. It provides a detailed analysis of the subject matter. Definition of a term is not limited to the one provided in a dictionary. The topic is elaborated after carrying out research to explore all aspects and interpretation. Some examples of topics for writing a definition essay are Freedom, Justice, Identity etc.

2.4.4.5 Process Essay

The type of essay which is used to explain a procedure is known as process essay. It is also termed as procedural essay. It generally elaborates a series of steps to perform a task. It also includes visual aids such as diagrams and charts. Some of the topics involving this type of essay writing are: How to Design a Strong Resume, How to Maintain a Balanced Diet, How to Change a Flat Tire, How to Remove Malware from a Computer etc

2.4.4.6 Compare and Contrast Essay

The type of essay which is used to analyze and compare two ideas, concepts and subjects is known as Compare and Contrast Essay. It is used to examine similarities and differences between the two subjects. Moving onwards, it is used to gain profound understanding of the relationship which exists between two subjects. It also helps learners to find and establish connection between two ideas or subjects. First paragraph presents the thesis statement presenting the two subjects or ideas for analysis. Body paragraphs present a comparative analysis of these two subjects in the form of the similarities and differences which exist between them. Conclusion paragraph restates the main points discussed in the essay. You can write this essay

for comparing and contrasting electric vehicles and traditional combustion based vehicles, Comparing novels, economic systems etc.

2.4.4.7 Argumentative Essay

They type of essay which is used to present an argument or claim on a specific point is known as argumentative essay. It generally relies on facts instead of emotions for convincing readers to agree and accept writer's perspectives. It provides a clear presentation of writer's stance on a particular topic. It also involves a comprehensive analysis of counterarguments to strengthen writer's viewpoint. Writer avoids personal anecdotes in this essay. Citations are included from pertinent sources. It may also include call-to-action at the end. Introduction presents the main argument in the form of thesis statement. Body paragraphs are used to provide evidence in the form of facts and statistics without using personal opinion or emotional language. Conclusion restate the stance, summary of main points and may include a call to action. Argumentative Essay can be written on topics such as Impact of Technology on Education, Impact of Social Media on Mental Health, Impact of AI on Workplace.

2.4.4.8 Persuasive Essay

The type of essay which is used to persuade readers to agree / accept writer's viewpoint. It is similar to an argumentative essay. However, persuasive essay is one-sided unlike an argumentative essay which also includes opposing views and perspectives. The main goal of the writer is to convince the readers through a variety of persuasive techniques. Analyze the difference of writing style in the given two paragraphs. The former is written in an argumentative style whereas the latter is written in persuasive style of essay writing:

- While the idea of free education may seem appealing on the surface, implementing such a system would place an unsustainable burden on governments and taxpayers, ultimately compromising the quality of education
- Education is a fundamental right that should be accessible to all, regardless of their financial circumstances. Implementing free education is not only morally just but also essential for fostering a more equitable society

2.4.4.9 Cause and Effect Essay

The type of essay which is used to explore and present causes of a specific phenomenon / event. The discussion on causes is followed by the effect and consequences of a phenomenon. Introduction presents the phenomenon within the thesis statement. Body paragraphs are used elaborate causes and effects of a phenomenon. Conclusion paragraph is used to restate the main points discussed in the essay. Transitional phrases such as because, as a result, consequently are used to connect causes and their effects. Example Topics: Causes and Effects of Air Pollution, Causes and Effects of Income Inequality, Causes and Effects of Stress on Mental Health etc

2.4.4.10 Critical Essay

The type of essay which is used to provide critical analysis, explanation and evaluation of art, literature, concept or idea etc is known as critical essay. It helps readers to become more aware with the strengths and weaknesses of a subject matter. It is generally used for reviewing books,

portraits and movies etc. Introduction has the thesis statement presenting the subject matter for analysis and evaluation. Body paragraphs consist of analysis in the form of plot, themes, characterization alongside textual examples. Evaluation exists in the form of highlighting the strengths and weakness of the work of art. Conclusion restate the summary of main points regarding the analyzed work of art. Example topics can be “Critical Evaluation of a (Film Name)”, “The Application of Symbolism in a (Novel)” etc.