

Introduction to Essay Writing

What is an Essay?

An essay is a piece of writing that revolves around a particular theme and contains the academic opinions of the person writing it.

An essay can perform one or more of the following functions:

- Analyses and critically evaluates a topic
- Presents the writer's argument for or against an idea
- Describes something
- Narrates a story
- Persuades the reader

Aldous Huxley described an essay as 'A literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything'.

Characteristics of a Good Essay

- **Brevity:** Express what you want concisely. Do not beat around the bush.
- **Coherence:** Every sentence and paragraph should flow smoothly and logically from the previous one. A clumsily written essay reflects not only the lack of preparation but also the absence of clarity of thought.
- **Unity:** The essay should never stray from its main purpose. Different points of view can be introduced, but they should all be used for the same subject.
- **Lucidity:** The essay should be easy to read and understand. Using tough words or difficult phrases may impress a few but can confuse many others. Great writers are praised not only for their beautiful ideas but also for the simplicity of their language.

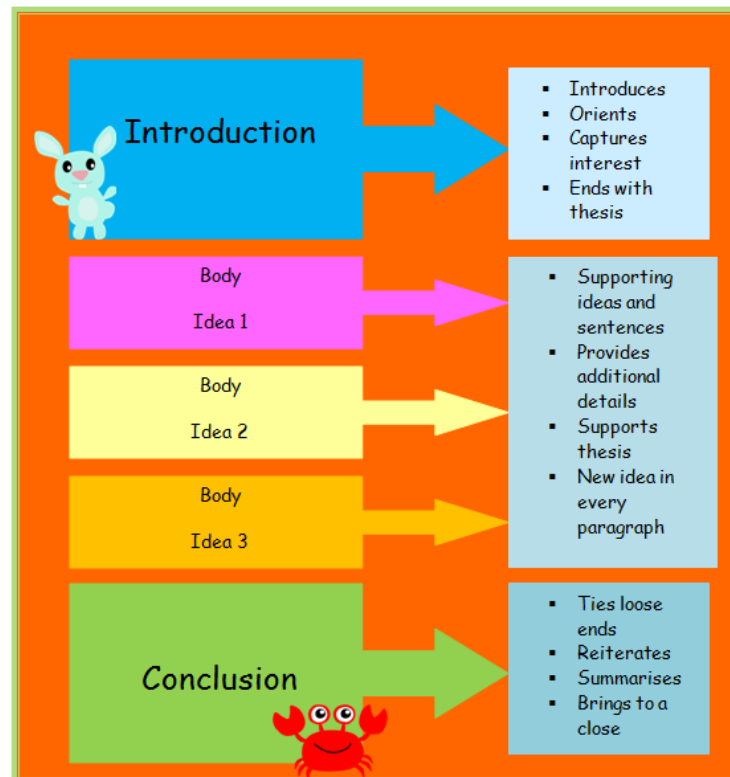
Objective of Essay Writing

Essay writing often forms a part of English written exams to test the ability of students to

- **Think critically:** Critical thinking involves understanding the task at hand and evaluating it appropriately.
- **Structure the ideas logically:** The essay has to be structured and coherent. The ideas have to neatly flow from one paragraph to the other.
- **Express views eloquently:** The student should be fluent in the language he or she is writing in. Ideas when presented shoddily may not make the right impact.

Parts of an Essay

- **Introduction:** It constitutes the opening paragraph of the essay.
 - It helps the reader get oriented with the topic.
 - It states the purpose of the essay.
 - It captures the interest of the reader.
 - It presents the general idea of the essay.
 - It often ends with the thesis or the main idea of the essay.
- **Body (Supporting Paragraphs):** They constitute the supporting sentences and ideas.
 - They provide the reader with additional details about the main idea.
 - They support the thesis of the writer.
 - There is no fixed number of supporting paragraphs.
 - Ideally, every supporting paragraph should contain a different idea.
- **Conclusion:** It constitutes the ending paragraph(s) of the essay.
 - It ties up loose ends of the paragraph.
 - It helps in reiterating or highlighting the main idea.
 - It summarises all the arguments.
 - It brings the essay to a logical close.
 - It never ends in a detail.



Example:

Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The idea is explained.• <u>The main idea or thesis is stated.</u>	Terrorism: A Cataclysmic Threat <p>We can define terrorism as the systematic use of violence and other intimidation techniques to achieve goals. Unlike wars that are fought by the government, terrorist activities are controlled entirely by rogue elements and dissenters. <u>Terrorist activities have the potential to tear the very fabric of society. It is therefore the objective of every government to monitor the growth of nefarious activities so that they be nipped in the bud.</u></p>
Body: Idea 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports the main idea through an example.	Terrorism has been growing at an alarming rate these days. Very few nations have been saved from the onslaught of terrorist activities. They have caused a profound loss of life and property. Contrary to popular beliefs, not just the prosperous nations such as the UK and the USA but also the underdeveloped nations such as Afghanistan have faced problems related to terrorism.
Body: Idea 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports the main idea through an example.	Terrorism can be categorised into various types—political terrorism, criminal terrorism, eco-terrorism and religious terrorism. Their modus operandi is the same: create fear and destruction to intimidate the government and to make it succumb to their demands. Like most institutions, there is a hierarchy in every terrorist organisation, and attacks are carried out at the behest of their kingpins.
Body: Idea 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports the main idea through an example.	There is a strange dichotomy in the attitudes concerning terrorist activities. Though the nations that are affected may condemn them, the groups whose cause is taken up by these organisations laud them as freedom fighters. For example, activities by the Pakistani terrorists on the Kashmir border are seen as acts of infiltration by the Indian government. However, to the Pakistani government, these mercenaries are nothing less than national heroes.
Conclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>The main idea or thesis of the essay is reiterated.</u>• The essay is brought to a close.	No matter how big or noble the cause, terrorist activities are unethical. Nothing justifies the killing and maiming of hundreds of innocent people to further one's own goals. Governments along with law enforcement agencies should strive to eliminate terrorism. They should isolate nations that encourage terrorist activities and keep a close watch on the sources than lend financial support to them. <u>In this manner, we can uproot terrorism and rid society of it.</u>

Types of Essays

Narrative Essay: A narrative essay tells the reader a story or narrates an incident. This type of composition is addressed in detail in the chapter 'Introduction to Story Writing'.

The characteristics of narrative essays are

- They follow a chronological order.
- They may contain firsthand accounts of the narrator.
- They may use first person, second person or third person narrative techniques.
- They may contain dialogues or conversations between characters.
- They use vivid descriptions of scenes, characters and moods in the story.
- They can contain elements of suspense or twists in the conclusion.

Sample 1

The Funniest Boy

He was the funniest boy I had ever met. He would make every one laugh till they toppled over their chairs and fell. His smartness was equally famed. There was no one in the school who did not know Dean Peters. He was just like me. We played football, topped the Math class, participated in Science exhibitions and acted in the annual plays. We were both all-rounders and best friends. However, there was one more side to us which no one knew about. We were not really as good as all thought us to be. We had a little secret.

We loved to play pranks on others. It was like a science for us. We planned, we experimented and finally we implemented. We were so good at what we did that no one ever suspected us of the action. The entire school was left baffled every time we pulled off a prank as the prankster would never be caught. On one such occasion, all the teachers found their attendance registers missing. All the children cheered with joy when the news reached them. Some of them even ran off home as they knew that they could not be marked absent without the registers.

The entire school was searched but to no avail. This trick worked well till our very own friend Jay told the teachers that he heard us speaking about the registers. We were caught and asked to confess. We finally accepted our mischief and apologised for the same. We were forgiven but not before completing the punishment of scrubbing all the trophies in the entire school.

Our mischief was pardoned taking into consideration our academic performance. That is when we realised that being smart did not give us the right to play pranks on others and that every action had a consequence. We surely improved our mistakes, but our qualities remain intact. We are still the most famous pair in the school and take part in every activity as before.

Sample 2

Conquering My Fear

I am a fairly brave person. I can confidently say that I am the go-to girl if somebody wants to flick a bug away from his or her collar, or if pacify a growling dog. Sometimes, I have stayed up late night trying to calm the frayed nerves of a friend a week before the exams. Is there anything that a fairly brave person like me is frightened of? I am afraid, (pun intended) the answer is yes. Since a very young age, I was frightened of water. Picnics on river banks were nightmares. Never did I appreciate the beauty of a setting sun without dreading the rolling waves that crashed against the shore. In clinical terms, I was aquaphobic – someone who had a pathological fear of water bodies.

Was I happy about it? Of course not! I didn't want to be the one sitting plastic chair when my family enjoyed a game of throw ball in the pool. This summer, I swore to myself that I will conquer this irrational fear at any cost. In order to put my plan into motion, I joined a swimming class. I told my instructor wasn't like the other students who have no trouble getting into water. The fundamental challenge in coaching me is that I had to be coaxed into the water first. Thankfully, the instructor was a patient person who took me seriously. He asked me to take my time and come back when I had figured out the reason for my fear. It took me a while but I went back when I found out that my phobia stemmed out of my fear of drowning. As a child, I was pushed into water and had survived the scary drowning experience. He smiled and said, "Now that you know the reason, let me introduce you to your adversary." I was about to perform the most daring act of my life, stepping into the pool.

I took my first step and found myself shivering. I immediately retreated. My instructor said benevolently, "Enough for today. Let's take baby steps." The next day I took two steps. Just when I felt the urge to run back, I told myself, "It's just water. It will not harm you." I stayed in water for full 10 minutes. I repeated the feat the day after and this time, I waded deeper into the water. I never thought I would see this day; here I was, standing in the pool with water that came up to my chest. Across the pool, I heard my instructor applauding.

In the weeks that followed, I was already preparing for my swimming lessons. In a matter of months, I could say that I tamed my *bête noir* and had become a decent swimmer. I surprised my family by diving into the pool during a family picnic. I could finally see the beauty of the setting sun without worrying about missing my step and falling head first into the sea. For me the greatest victory was challenging the limitations of my own mind and conquering my worst fears.

Descriptive Essay: A descriptive essay simply describes something to the reader.

The characteristics of descriptive essays are

- They appeal to one or more of the five senses of the reader—sight, smell, sound, taste and feel.
 - **Sight:** The light travelled through the canopy of leaves to break into various fragments. The flowers in various colours stood in full bloom.
 - **Smell:** As soon as you enter her house, you will be greeted by the fresh, warm and savoury smell of bread baking. You also catch a citrusy whiff of her famous lemon pie.
 - **Sound:** The corridor reverberated with the sound of sharp clicks emanating from the heels of somebody's shoes. The sounds were well spaced with a difference of a second between each click.
 - **Taste:** As soon as I bit into the exotic-looking fruit, my mouth was flooded with its succulent juices. It was the tastiest thing I had ever had.
 - **Feel:** Tinkerbelle my Persian cat brushed against my face in a rare show of affection. Her soft, cottony fur grazed against my chin and her pointy whiskers tickled me.
- They try to replicate in the reader the emotions or feelings experienced by the writer.

Sample 3

Ajji's Treats

Appetising foods are those that appeal both to the eyes and the palate. You may have seen on television how great chefs go to any lengths to make sure that the carefully crafted food is aesthetically presented to taste. They meticulously measure the colour, the feel, the smell and the dimensions of the food when they mount it onto the plate. Whenever I watch such shows, I am reminded of my Ajji who had the ability to give any seasoned chef a run for his money. She never bothered to follow any of the fastidious rules of modern day chefs or presented her culinary creations in an appealing manner. She did not believe in fussing over how food was presented, but she did believe in how food was cooked.

Ajji's food was not attractive to look at. The laddoos were sometimes not round enough. Lumps and chunks would be barely holding onto one other in a hastily crafted sphere. Her puran polis reminded me of the map of Europe. The dal curry looked pallid without any garnishing. My heart did ache at the sight of rosy basundi served in ugly plastic bowls. Her food was definitely not meant for someone who feasted with his eyes; it was meant to be enjoyed with the soul.

The haphazardly made laddoos were made with so much love that we would not let a crumb go to waste. Her golden puran polis with jagged edges were filled with a delicious mixture that would melt in your mouth. The fragrance of her pallid dal curry was welcomed into the homes of the neighbours. We joked that the neighbours would be full by the aroma alone. On special occasions, she made basundi by stirring the milk meticulously for hours. Even though it was served in ugly bowls, we would never pass a chance to enjoy it.

Today she is not with us and neither are her recipes. As a token of her love for me, she bequeathed her personal cookbook to me. No matter how well I try to recreate her laddoos, I can never make them look as beautifully lumpy as she did.

Sample 4

My Native Place

My parents hail from a small village in Kerala which is nestled among mountains in a scenic district of the state. Ever year, I visit my native place with my family. It is a trip that I look forward to all year. My father books the ticket two months in advance as it is difficult to procure reservations on a short notice. Although I have lived in the city all my life, I feel that I never belonged to it. I have always felt at home in the quaint mountain village that is far removed from the hustle and bustle of the city life.

It takes us 18 hours by train to reach the railway station that is closest to my village. The journey is usually gruelling in the summers but very pleasant in the winters and in the monsoons. We plan our trip in the summer months since we get a two-month vacation in April. In order to beat the heat, we travel by the air-conditioned coaches every year. We board the train at noon and we reach our destination at 6 am the next day.

The morning air is heavy with the scent of flowers and wet foliage. The temple bells start ringing at 6:30 am and the sound of bhajans fills the air. The village is only a 20-minute rickshaw ride away from the station. When we enter my grandmother's house, we are welcomed by her diminutive figure holding a lamp. According to her, it is auspicious to welcome loved ones by lighting the lamp at the altar of God. The moment we set foot into the house, we are filled with a sense of nostalgia and love. After a sumptuous yet simple breakfast, we relax with our family in the courtyard.

The cool mountain air is laden with scents of the rustic countryside. From afar, we hear the sounds of birds. My sister and I make paper boats and run to the little babbling brook that flows southwards. We set the boats on the water and watch them bob up and down. Far away from the world of video games and television, we seek fun in a world of simplicity.

The house itself has a personality. Simple, two-storeyed, made of stone walls and a thatched roof, the house is an old friend who warmly embraces you every time you meet. The rooms are small but well maintained. On the ground floor is a room that my grandmother uses for storing condiments and grains. It is illuminated with a single light bulb and an old-fashioned lock-and-key style door. In its corner is a small bed. The calming silence of the room soothes my ears and transports me into a magical place. I feel weightless. The smell of the spices envelops me. On many occasions, I have spent hours sprawled on that bed reading a book or listening to music. If I ever have to pick a favourite place, then I have no doubt this would be it.

When twilight descends on the little hamlet, large clusters of stars start appearing in the sky. Such a sight is never seen in the city as the lights obscure the stars that appear in the sky. My grandmother lights the lamp again and we all gather around her to say our evening prayers. After enjoying her simple, rustic yet delicious meal, we retire for the night.

Sometimes when I am upset, I think of my quaint little house in the village, my grandmother's warm embrace and the small room that smells of spices. They immediately help me put my worries away and bring a smile to my face.

Expository Essay: An expository essay explains an instruction, a process or a method. The purpose of such essays is to orient the reader with the knowledge the writer wishes to share.

The characteristics of expository essays are

- To present facts or details in an objective and organised manner
- To provide information and analysis
- To compare and contrast features
- The use of the cause and effect method
- An approach that may directly address the reader

Sample 5

The Process of Digestion

Your digestive system is one of the most wondrous processes in your body. It is uniquely designed to convert your food into nutrients which are needed for your body's functioning. If not for the process of digestion, the human body would be deprived of nutrients and may slowly degenerate. Let us learn how it works.

The food which you eat is broken down partially in the mouth. Your saliva aids in the process by making it pliable and breaking down the starch. Your teeth grind the food into a fine paste-like consistency. From the mouth, the food travels through the pharynx to the esophagus.

The esophagus is a muscular tube which connects the pharynx to the stomach. The food reaches the stomach by means of systematic contractions called peristalsis. These contractions facilitate the movement of the food.

Your stomach is the next destination of the food. It is a pouch-like organ which processes food. Here, the food is completely broken down. Powerful muscles of the stomach along with strong gastric juices blend the food into a paste-like consistency. From the stomach, the paste-like mixture moves further down into the small intestine. It has three parts—duodenum, jejunum and ileum. It is coiled inside the abdominal cavity and can be about 20 feet in length. In the small intestine, the process of breaking down food is continued. Your pancreas and liver supply enzymes and bile, respectively. Bile helps in the digestion of fat and eliminates the waste products in the blood. Through peristalsis, the food is moved and mixed with the digestive juices. Duodenum breaks down the food, while the jejunum and ileum absorb all the nutrients and release them into the blood stream. Your colon is a 5-6-foot-long tube which connects the caecum to the rectum. It absorbs all the water in the stools and releases the debris and bacteria into the rectum. The residue is passed into the anus, from where it is eliminated as faeces.

In the complicated procedure, all the digestive organs work in unison each fulfilling its duty with precision. Even if one of these procedures fails, your body may stop functioning properly. Such is the beauty of digestion.

Sample 6

How to Optimise Your Time as a Student

It is generally believed that students have a lot of free time. They can afford to spend their time without a care in the world and have the liberty to live as they please. Nothing can be further from the truth. Childhood and adolescence are not simply about whiling away time with immature pursuits; those years play a fundamental role in building one's ambitions and shaping one's career. Students have to juggle their studies along with their social and familial commitments. Some students are naturally attuned to using their time wisely, but some may not be blessed with those skills. In order to optimise one's time, students should discipline themselves by incorporating some time-saving tips.

Being organised is the cardinal rule in saving time. It simplifies one's life. Being a student involves extensive perusal and note making. Students also take down notes in class which are dictated by their teachers. The lazy ones do not keep a track of where these notes are. As the exams near, such students may find themselves in a chaotic situation. The diligent ones can access all their notes and use them with ease. In order to save time, students should start by adopting small practices. They could maintain separate notebooks for different subjects and organise notes in a folder which are labeled according to date and subject.

Keeping the right company also matters. Good fruits when left with spoilt ones turn rotten themselves. Similarly, the company of lazy, insincere people can turn any diligent student bad. Good habits, like the bad ones, rub off on others. So, students should make a conscious effort to avoid falling into bad company. They should seek out the ones who could instill more discipline into their lives.

Focus on understanding the basics of every subject. The bedrock of the subject lies in its basics. Without which, education will not have a strong foundation. Knowing the basics also helps students in grasping difficult concepts easily. Therefore, students intent on saving time should go back to their textbooks. Prioritising tasks can help students save time if they are on a tight deadline. Create a timetable by prioritising the difficult subjects so that more time can be spent on them.

Following these basic rules can help students optimise their time. They needn't fret about balancing studies with recreation if they were to make some smart choices.

Argumentative Essay: An argumentative essay tests the student’s ability to convince the reader about the topic given in the prompt. The writer has to defend his or her position by giving evidence to the reader.

The characteristics of argumentative essays are

- They are written either for or against an argument.
- The writer has to sound convincing by providing evidence to support his/her point of view.
- The tone of the essay should be persuasive.
- Unlike expository essays, argumentative essays present the readers with opinions of the writer.

Sample 7

Co-education Should Be Stopped	
<p>For</p> <p>Co-education is the new trend of the age. However, parents need to understand that selecting a school for their child is an essential responsibility which should not be overshadowed by their attempt of creating an image of themselves.</p> <p>It is observed that in co-ed schools, there is often a power struggle between boys and girls. This is harmful for the mental health of the students receiving negative feedback as it crushes their self-esteem. Also, research states that in co-ed schools, boys are always treated with less care and attention.</p> <p>Right from their childhood, they are expected to be tougher, stronger and better than the girls. This is a disadvantage for both. The girls are not challenged enough which makes them repressed and dependent, while the boys are challenged to such an extent that their childhood is lost.</p> <p>In contrast to this, same-sex schools are advantageous at various levels. Especially in countries like India, where there is a need for sex education, it becomes easier to educate children without making them embarrassed when all of them are of the same sex. Finally, I would like to say that like a flower a child grows and blooms best between the surrounding of its own kind. It is our duty to ensure that our children feel this sense of security and freedom at school. Thus, I believe that same-sex schools are better than co-ed schools.</p>	<p>Against</p> <p>Co-education is a system of educating boys and girls together. It is economical and generates a spirit of comradeship between boys and girls. Same-sex schools, on the other hand, are expensive and increase gender discrimination.</p> <p>Student diversity suffers at same-sex schools. It may be easier for students to participate actively and do well academically at a single sex institution. However, the world outside is not single sex. Therefore, when students step out of a same-sex school, it may prove difficult for them to adjust to a co-ed work atmosphere after they graduate. On the other hand, students from co-ed schools are comfortable talking to people of the opposite sex and are not intimidated by their presence.</p> <p>Same-sex schools may promote gender bias in a country like India. In a co-education system, there is no discrimination between boys and girls. Co-education is a boon to a country where there is a shortage of well-trained teachers. The same staff can teach both boys and girls at the same time in the same class. Establishing more co-educational institutes can help in spreading literacy even with the limited teaching staff and infrastructure.</p> <p>In conclusion, co-education is better than single sex education. It is economical and generates a spirit of comradeship among students.</p>

Sample 8

Should Yoga be Made Compulsory in Schools?	
Yes, It Should Be Made Compulsory.	No, It Shouldn't Be Made Compulsory.
<p>Yoga is an ancient spiritual practice which originated in the Indian subcontinent. The word originates from the Sanskrit term 'yuj' which means 'to yoke' or 'to join'. It alludes to the union of the individual consciousness with the universal spirit. This 5000-year-old practice enriches not only the body but also the soul.</p> <p>Recently, the Indian government proposed an initiative to make yoga compulsory in schools across the nation. I welcome this decision since school children are always under tremendous stress.</p> <p>The practice of yoga during school hours will help students alleviate mental tension. This will help them cope with the stress associated with student life. Yoga is a time-efficient technique to keep stress at bay. Just a few minutes of practice can allay students' stress to a great degree.</p> <p>Apart from relieving stress, yoga also helps in clearing one's mind. Yogic practices like mediation and controlled breathing help to silence the mind and put worries to rest. It aids in concentration which helps students focus on their studies.</p> <p>Students in the growing up years often slouch when they walk or sit. Bad posture causes problems such as back pain later in life. Yoga helps build core strength and improves the flexibility of the spine. It repairs posture problems and improves one's oxygen intake.</p> <p>For more reasons than one, yoga should be made de rigueur for school students. There is nothing to lose only to gain from this ancient practice. Our youngsters should appreciate this wonderful gift that has been given to us by our ancestors.</p>	<p>Yoga is an ancient spiritual practice which originated in the Indian subcontinent. The word originates from the Sanskrit term 'yuj' which means 'to yoke' or 'to join'. It alludes to the union of the individual consciousness with the universal spirit. This 5000-year-old practice enriches not only the body but also the soul.</p> <p>Although there are numerous benefits to this ancient Indian practice, I firmly believe that teaching yoga in schools should be discouraged. I base my belief on the fact that ours is a democratic, secular country. The practice of yoga in educational institutions goes against the democratic values of our nation.</p> <p>Most parents entrust their children to educational institutions with the belief that only academic knowledge is imparted to them. With the proposal to make yoga compulsory in schools, parents are frightened for the religious integrity of their children.</p> <p>Many political observers allege that the government has a political agenda behind imposing yoga. A few voices have also alleged that it is a way to further the ruling party's effort to browbeat the minorities.</p> <p>'Sun Salutes' or 'Suryanamaskar' involves bowing down in front of the Sun in respect. The act of veneration towards anything other than God is a sin in many monotheistic religions.</p> <p>One may argue saying that yoga does not have any religious connotations and that it can be done without acknowledging its Hindu undertones. But instead of indulging in polemics about the rights and the wrongs, the government should respect the sentiments of the people and soften its aggressive marketing of yoga.</p>

	Above all, as a democratic nation, the citizens have the right to choose. Any government imposing its will on its people is moving away from its democratic ideals and turning into a dictatorship.
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Reflective Essays: A reflective essay is a mirror of the writer's psyche. In a reflective essay, the writer analyses his or her own mind and writes by drawing on his or her personal experiences. It expresses how the experiences have changed the writer or made him or her grow.

The characteristics of a reflective essay are

- It is not a product of the writer's extensive research.
- It is a product of his or her beliefs and experiences.
- It identifies the outcome of his or her experiences.

Sample 9

Who Are We?

I have always thought about the nature of my existence. What am I? What is my identity? Made of flesh, blood and a complex system of internal organs, is my body my identity? My countenance that expresses my various moods and emotions, is my face my identity? Are my thoughts that make me who I am? We are much more than what we perceive ourselves to be. We need to move beyond the obvious to ponder upon the truth of our existence. Ask yourself, "Who am I?"

The Upanishads state, 'Aham Bhrahmasmi', meaning 'I am Brahman'. The term Brahman here does not refer to the caste; it refers to the ultimate truth that underlies all the phenomena in the universe. According to the Vedas, the real self is not the body or the mind. Beyond the realms of the body and the mind is the soul. The soul represents our consciousness; consciousness is nothing but the awareness of the self by the self. It is not arise out of our material interactions.

Physically, we are composed of various elements—oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium etc. These elements constitute our bodies. If so, we are our bodies. What role does consciousness play in our identity?

The consciousness is a difficult term to define or to understand. It cannot be explained with the help of numbers or explained with words. We identify ourselves with materials because they provide pleasure to our physical selves. We form attachments for our need to be loved. We form ties that we cannot break free from. This further wedges a gap between us and our consciousness and we lose ourselves in the maze of worldliness.

We should never get distracted from our quest to uncover the mysteries about ourselves. Only then will we realise our purpose in the vast system of planets, stars, life and galaxies.

Sample 10

How Education Enriched Me

The importance of education for men and women cannot be understated. It plays a crucial role in the personal development of an individual and enriches the socio-economical fabric of society. Today, education is necessary for success, and each individual is pitched against the other in a bid to outperform one another. Education is something that can give the person the necessary edge over the others. It is definitely an instrument of social progress.

Education does not merely end at sending children to school. It is a fire that has to be stoked repeatedly. I was born to intelligent parents who understood the importance of imparting education to children. They not only sent me to a very good school, they also whetted my interest in a variety of subjects by buying books and educational toys for me. Games such as *Scrabble*, *Taboo*, math puzzles and the *Rubik's Cube* stimulated my brain cells and strengthened my intellectual faculties.

My childhood was spent in reading books of all kinds. Exposure to classical works of literature enriched my knowledge of language. Thanks to my extensive reading, I also possess a very vibrant vocabulary. Encyclopaedias on subjects like science and geography made me aware of the basic scientific principles and cultures of people all around the world. History made me realise how human follies can change the course of our progress. Historical figures like Gandhi and Martin Luther King made me understand that social change can be brought about without the need to shed blood.

Math introduced me into the mesmerising world of numbers. It challenged my mind and made it sharper. Physics, Chemistry and Biology helped me understand the laws governing the physical world around me. It made me appreciate the universe more. I often ponder how the world as we know it came into being. Though I am left without answers most of the times, I feel fortunate enough to have a mind that can question its own existence. I am able to weigh my actions morally and assess the repercussions of my words thanks to my education.

Without the benison of education, my life would have been no better than that of an animal. Apart from providing us with the knowledge to get by in life, it makes us rise above our primal tendencies. It expands our world view and makes us more civilised. Educated people can become the driving forces in the success of a nation. Education has made me what I am today. I am thankful that I, unlike many of my countrymen, have been fortunate enough to receive it.

Proverb Essays: A proverb essay is one in which a proverb or a saying has to be expanded and explained to the reader.

The characteristics of proverb essays are

- They are based on how the writers interpret the proverbs.
- Proverbs are not to be understood literally; context is provided in the form of examples.
- They are not scientific in nature.
- The writers do not present scientific data.
- The tone is sombre or reflective.

Examples:

Sample 11

Next to Love, Sympathy is the Most Divine Passion

The word 'Sympathy' is derived from the Greek prefix 'syn' or 'sym' which means together or joint and the root word 'pathy' which means to feel. Therefore, sympathy means to have a fellow-feeling towards another living thing. It is characterised by the ability to understand the suffering of others and feel sorry for their plight. It is a trait that makes us distinctly human. It sets man apart from beast; the civilised apart from the uncivilised; and the kind apart from the cruel.

The feeling of sympathy has its role to play in the human society. It facilitates bonding between human beings and makes the burden of suffering lighter. Sympathy makes us extend a helping hand towards someone in need and fosters a feeling of fellowship. Often the kind words of a stranger, a reassuring embrace of a friend and the patient ears of a dear one take the sting away from our pain.

Sympathy also ensures harmony in society. Apart from the role it plays in abating somebody's pain, sympathy also acts as a deterrent against crimes. It prevents us from wrongdoing through the voice of our conscience. Lack of sympathy is the foremost trait of a criminal.

The ability to shed a tear for someone is seen as a sign of weakness by shallow society. But the perpetrators of this belief often forget that the strongest of individuals sometimes yearn for sympathy. Only hearts as cold as stone would be devoid of this beautiful emotion since sympathy is a celebration of everything that makes us human.

Sample 12

Keep your Friends Close and your Enemies Closer

The proverb in its literal sense may seem counterintuitive. Why in the world would anybody want to keep their enemies closer than they keep their friends? The answer to this can be sought in the figurative implications of the proverb. The quote 'Keep your friends close and your enemies closer' is sometimes attributed to Nicolo Machiavelli, Sun Tzu and even to Don Corleone, the protagonist of the novel *The Godfather*. In the heart of the proverb lies the message that one can learn more from enemies than one does from friends. There are many reasons why this proverb holds water.

First, you can learn a lot from someone whom you despise. The best wisdom does not necessarily come from being with friends. A friend is someone who is agreeable and who does not become an obstacle or a threat to your ambitions. Chances are that you and your friend share a similar world view. He or she is an extension of your own self.

An enemy, on the contrary, is someone who you don't trust and who is aiming for the same things as you are. They are your polar opposites. Their ideas, beliefs and world view may be in stark contrast with your own. By observing them, you can get a fresh perspective on a situation which you may not receive from your friends.

To outwit your enemies, you should pay close attention to their moves. This can help you stay ahead of them all the time. Keeping them at close quarters helps you in determining their motives. This helps you in anticipating all their moves.

Your enemy may have a lot of weaknesses which he does not like to bring to the fore. On the outside, he may seem like a formidable foe, but on the inside, he may be hiding some flaws which he does not wish to show the world. Knowing your enemy's weakness is the biggest instrument in anybody's arsenal.

Sometimes, unexpectedly, you may find that your enemy may not be the 'scheming' and 'evil' villain you have imagined him to be. You may be surprised to find that he shares some of your values as well. An enemy may cease to be an enemy and you may learn to empathise with him/her. Hence, in order to be successful, you should be able to exploit your friendships and gain wisdom by observing your enemies.

Picture Composition: Picture composition is a type of essay where the student is expected to write his or her interpretation of a given picture.

The characteristics of a picture composition are

- The content of the essay is based entirely on the picture provided.
- Students use their imaginative powers to see a story or an idea behind the picture.
- The style of the essay could be narrative or descriptive.

Example:



Sample 13

The Lazy Tiger

Once upon a time, there lived a tiger. His mother named him Mkali, which means fierce. But that was a misnomer because Mkali was a lazy little cat. Nothing in the jungle could excite him. His mother Jasiri was an expert hunter. She had single-handedly provided for the entire ambush once when food was scarce in the jungle. She had also taught her other children how to prey on hippopotamuses and how to tackle prey with antlers. She was very well respected in the Tiger community and had held the title of 'Tigress Extraordinaire'. The carnivores of the jungle sniggered when they spoke of her perpetually sleepy son. "How could he be born to Jasiri?" the Hyena Cheka said. Tiririka the python added, "That boy wouldn't swat a fly if it were to be sitting on his nose all day." Mkali was never bothered. He loved his life; lazing around the river all day, returning home for dinner, feasting on the prey his mother had painstakingly caught and then sleeping on the thickest branch of his favourite tree.

One day, the unthinkable happened. Jasiri had cornered a water buffalo and was preparing to strike it down in one swift move. Suddenly, the beast swung its head goring her grievously. Her den was at a distance so she had to drag herself all the way. Mkali wondered why his mother didn't call him for supper that day. Once he entered the den, he saw his mother moaning in pain. She said, "Son, I think I am going to die. I don't know how you would feed yourself." Mkali's eyes welled up. He was aware of his prodigal ways, but he didn't want to let his mother die thinking that her son could not provide for himself.

Something changed in him that day. He walked to a nearby pool and looked at his own reflection. He saw in himself a fierce tiger who had finally realised his life's purpose. He had to make his mother proud.

Mkali started providing for his ailing mother. He hunted small animals first. He then graduated to preying on larger animals such as sambars. He gathered medicinal herbs and ground them. Jasiri's wounds were very deep, but with Mkali's loving care she could walk again. The other animals were dumbfounded by his metamorphosis. Jasiri, on the other hand, was proud that her son proved everyone wrong.

Tips for Writing an Essay

Preparation

- Read: The more you read, the better you get. Reading essays will give you inspiration to write. It will fill you with knowledge which you can use to enrich your writing.
- Write: Practise writing essays. This will give you the necessary confidence that you require during the exams. Writing also sharpens your thought process preparing you to deal with essay questions with much ease.

Writing

- Think about the idea given in the title or the prompt.
 - What type of essay will be appropriate?
 - What could be the main ideas?
 - How to write the introduction, the body and the conclusion?
 - Write all the ideas.
- Structure your essay.
 - Create an outline of your essay.
 - Do not use more than two sentences for introduction and conclusion, respectively.
 - Therefore, it is important to plan your essay before instead of writing spontaneously.
 - Arrange the ideas in a chronological order if you are attempting a narrative essay.
 - Arrange them in the increasing order of importance while attempting a descriptive or an expository essay.
 - Remember to conclude the essay.
- Use a consistent tense form while writing the essay.
- Express clearly.
- Be original in your ideas. Don't be afraid to think out of the box.
- Use your own memories or your experiences to add to the essay.
- Recheck for any grammatical errors after finishing the essay.