ENGLISH SKILLS

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING AN ESSAY

Have a clear understanding of the type of essay your teacher wants you to write. A more creative type, such as the narrative (storytelling) essay, may not have as many restrictions as the expository (information providing) essay, which is more formal.

Plan your essay carefully before writing the rough draft. Use an outline, especially with formal essays, because it keeps you focused and on track as you write.

An essay should discuss only one major topic which has been limited to a manageable size. Divide this topic into several subtopics which will become the discussions for each of the body paragraphs.

The essay's main idea, the thesis, is usually placed at the end of the introductory paragraph. However, check with your instructor for his or her preference.

Make sure sentences and paragraphs follow one another in a clear, logical fashion. Use chronological order (time order) when relating a personal experience, explaining how to do something, or describing how something works. Use strong support when giving reasons for an opinion and place the strongest support last.

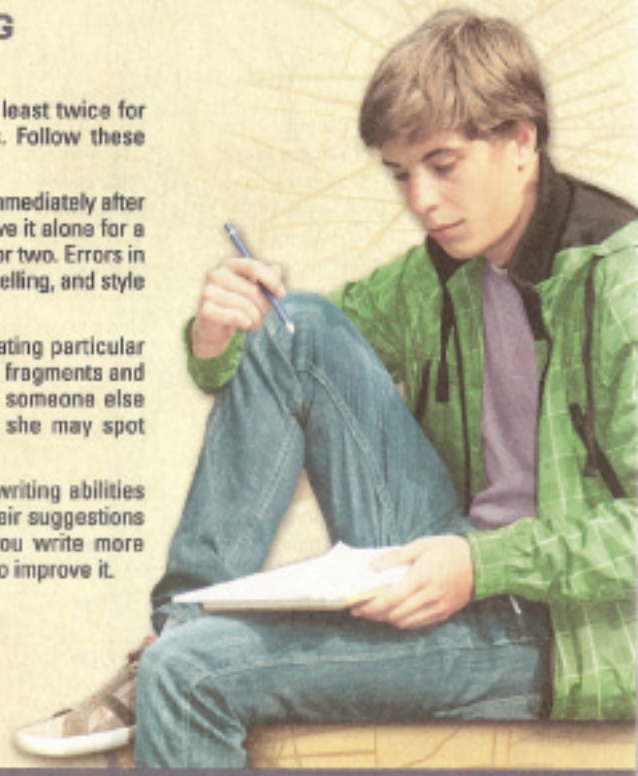
The body paragraphs should be clear and interesting. To ensure this, do the following:

- Consider the audience for whom you are writing. Try not to write above or below their level of understanding and interest.
- Write a strong concluding paragraph to summarize your essay in a meaningful way. It creates the final impression of your message.
- Vary your sentence structure and length.

PROOFREADING AN ESSAY

Proofread your writing at least twice for improvements and errors. Follow these helpful guidelines:

- DO NOT read for errors immediately after finishing your piece. Leave it alone for a few hours or even a day or two. Errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style will be easier to find.
- If you have difficulty locating particular errors, such as sentence fragments and run-on sentences, have someone else read your paper. He or she may spot errors you overlooked.
- Ask people with strong writing abilities to review your paper. Their suggestions and insights will help you write more objectively as you work to improve it.



HIP TIP

Paragraph Techniques

Develop an essay's paragraphs by using one or more of the following techniques:

- vivid details
- facts
- logical reason
- examples
- comparisons or contrasts
- definitions



CONNECTING WORDS

Use connecting words (transitions) to tie your ideas together so their relationships are clear to the reader. Here are some examples:

- accordingly
- again
- and
- at the same time
- besides
- but
- consequently
- conversely
- eventually
- finally
- first
- for example
- for instance
- furthermore
- however
- in addition
- in conclusion
- in fact
- in other words
- in the same way
- indeed
- likewise
- meanwhile
- moreover
- nevertheless
- next
- otherwise
- similarly
- so
- still
- therefore
- thus
- yet