GP Essay Writing Skills

1. **Elements of a Good Essay**

**Introduction**

A good essay is a pleasurable reading material that provides clear and meaningful information, provoking the thoughts of the readers to analyse, evaluate and criticize. To achieve this aim of writing a good essay, it is important for the writer to take note of the characteristics of a good essay.

**Characteristics of a good essay**

Focus

It is imperative to ensure that the whole essay is written with the focus of the essay in mind. Your various points in your essay must be directed to the requirements of the essay. (- Focus on the understanding of the question)

Relevancy

All your ideas should be related to the topic and these are to be built to establish your points of view that will enable you to answer the question. The points must be linked the requirements of the question, satisfying the demand of the focus of the question. (Developing perspective that is linked to the discussion)

**How to create relevancy in paragraph development?**

Optimism, rather than pessimism, is the attitude we need to have a purposeful life. Discuss.

How far has technology made our lives more meaningful?

Unity

The points you have stated must be developed with a sense of unity that will answer the question Focusing on unity will enable you to direct your discussion on developing lines of perspectives that will create a logical argument, making your essay logical, persuasive and analytical.

How to achieve unity?

Balance

Your essay needs to create a sense of balance to make sure that it provides a fair and well-developed argument. This essay should cover a wide spectrum of areas, which cover the points that will provide more perspectives of discussion. There is also a need to take note of the length of coverage for the essay in respect to the introduction, main body and conclusion. Ensure that the introduction is not too lengthy that your main points are left with little time and space for expression. (provide counter-arguments / opposing views or rebuttals)

Areas of discussion

(This is an important part of your paragraph development)

Coherence

The essay should follow a clear order and move steadily towards the building of your argument. Your main ideas should be arranged in a definite manner such that the important ones stand out prominently, and the relation between ideas is clearly seen.

Coherence is seen into two main areas, mainly in the flow of argument and secondly, in the respective paragraph. In the essay, the various points in the essay must be connected and support the line of argument. As for the respective sub-points, they must support the main point in the respective paragraphs. To ensure that your paragraph is well elaborated to support the main point, the sentences must be arranged and linked in a very cohesive manner, drawing out a persuasive and systematic argument.

(linking paragraphs – linking sentence / linking of sentences – connectors and contrast)

**B. Paragraphing Development (Introduction)**

### Importance of Introduction

Writing a good introduction serves to provide readers a good impression of your essay. The writer needs to provide a comprehensive understanding of the title of the essay and clearly shows his main perspectives of discussion. Through this depiction, the writer guides the reader on how he is presenting his discussion on the stated title.

### Process

Understand the nature of discussion for the question

The understanding of the question will enable the writer to derive an approach on how the question is to be answered since the nature of discussion will determine the flow of argument. The nature of discussion will explain the focus of the question and the perspectives of the question.

(focus on the requirements of the question – subjects and their issue for discussion)

(cause- effects – solutions)

Provide a comprehensive overview of the title (observation)

In the overview, the writer needs to provide an understanding of the subjects in the title in term of their main characteristics. **If the title is too abstract or based a quotation, there is a need to provide a meaningful rephrase, which will give the reader a comprehensive understanding of the subjects**. A parameter of the subjects is developed and the link between the various subjects is also established.

**(The route to a happy life is moderation in everything. Discuss)**

**(no cause is worth dying for – DYA?)**

**Have an observation that is linked to the theme of essay**

**Link the observation to the two perspectives – which is the proposition**

**State your stand**

Provide a clear address of the main perspectives of discussion

The main lines of argument are stated in the introduction to show how the essay will be discussed. It sets the directions to guide the reader on how the argument will be set so to enhance the degree of persuasiveness since the reader has a good idea on the development of the essay.

Depends on how the type of question –

Development of a stand for DYA type of question

To what extent would you agree that city life today is more exciting and vibrant?

Observation of the subjects and their links

Set perspectives – thesis and anti-thesis

Stand – choose from the two perspectives

Provide a treatment of analysis

It is essential for the writer to provide the reader a brief approach on how the title will be answered in the introduction. In doing so, the main areas of discussion may be set based on the level of discussion or category of discussion.

* Used it for question type – extent of agreement
* 9. To what extent are people judged more by their physical appearance than by their abilities?

(observation – proposition)

In order to assess the extent of agreement that people are judged more by their physical appearance than by their abilities, we will need to examine how people applies this view on the way they work, interact with others and make decision in many issues in life.

1. Observation
2. Derive proposition
3. Set the areas of discussion and how it will be examined

To what extent would you agree that city life today is more vibrant and exciting?

**C. Paragraph Development**

### Process

**1. Development of a topic sentence**

The topic sentence is the most important sentence in the paragraph as it depicts the main idea of the paragraph. It is commonly conceptualized into a noun phrase or a clause and is properly constructed to answer the question based on the perspective of argument. This sentence must be able to show that an overview understanding of the idea and has an argument which will support your perspective of discussion. Hence, the notion of conceptualization focuses on the art of coining a notion with the appropriate words.

In this topic sentence, it must depict the category of discussion, the conceptualized idea and the perspectives of discussion and the intensification of the idea.

Perspective – supporting the main area of discussion –

Idea – should answer the requirements of the perspective

Category – sub area of discussion

Intensification – effect that supports your idea

©From an economic angle, (P) longer life expectancy creates more problems than benefits as (I)the high cost of living and medical expenditure undermines the elderly (I)to live a fruitful life without financial apprehension.

Focus

**From a health point of view, one needs to be moderate in their eating behaviors to attain a happy life as the balanced diet will build a healthy body to conduct activities that the individuals will enjoy.**

**Do you agree that family is more important than ever in the modern world?**

**Stand – disagree with the view that family is more important than ever in the modern world**

**Focus -**

**Opposing view -**

**Rebuttal -**

**Supporting view -**

**3. Elaboration of the idea in the paragraph**

In the process of elaboration of the point of the paragraph, it is important to stay

focus on the argument. It is often to see how the writer skips the discussion from one particular point to another intentionally or unintentionally, deviating from his intended argument. This happens as the writer may not know how to explain the point or lack of knowledge. To avoid this, the writer can list out the elaboration on a point form basis before he begins.

1. Focus of the question:  
   ‘The pursuit of happiness will cause more harm than good.’ Discuss.

The writer also needs to take note of the uses of other sentences which will help on how to elaborate the paragraph. There are supporting sentences, which explain the idea of the sentences to convince how the conceived idea supports the argument and exemplary sentence, which are used to depict examples to provide evident for discussion. There are also concluding sentence that will enforce the argument at the end of the paragraph.

It is also important to understand how different ways of sentence-making can be used to illustrate the supporting point. This part of discussion will be explained at another part of discussion.

Lastly, the strategy of discussion in the paragraph is crucial in derivation of a sound paragraph. The focus of the paragraph development is to answer the flow of argument in the paragraph.

**D. Examples**

1. **Significance of Exemplary**
2. **Types of exemplary**
   1. **Statistics**
   2. **Incident**
   3. **Institution**
   4. **Analogy**
   5. **Observation**
   6. **Quotes**
   7. **Theories and Concepts**
   8. **Policies**
3. **How to find evidence to derive examples to support your discussion**
   1. **Google Search**
   2. **Using incidents to support development**
   3. **Classification of incidences**
4. **How to develop exemplary to support discussion**
   1. **Develop a causation which requires the use of an example to support the idea**
   2. **Using the example to derive a causation to prove the perspective**

**Structure of EOA**

Introduction

observation - provide understanding of the subject

Proposition - the proposed statement of discussion

method of answering - how you examine this question to assess the extent of agreement

Main Body

1.1 Proposition 1 - why you agree to this proposition

1.2 EOA - which area do you disagree to reflect the extent of agreement

2.1 Proposition 2 - why you agree to this proposition from another category

2.2 EOA - which area do you disagree to the reflect the extent of agreement

3. can either continue with the last point as the 1st and 2nd

4. can also set a paragraph of analysis to show the extent of agreement by identifying the key determinants to decide the extent of agreement

Conclusion

summary of your stand based on the extent of agreement

suggestion

**Structure of DYA**

Introduction

Observation of the Subjects

Set perspectives – Thesis and anti-thesis

Set your stand – either thesis or anti-thesis

Main body

1. Opposing view

2. Rebuttal - prove why opposing view is wrong

3. Supporting view

3.1 - category 1

3.2 - category 2

3.3 - category 3

Conclusion

Retort your stand  
Provide opinion and suggestion

**Essay Question on Education**

**‘Many receive an education, but few are educated.’ Discuss with reference to situations in your society today.**

Nature of discussion

The focus of the question is to make discussion on the meaning of being educated by examining related areas like the purpose of education and benefits of education. To assess whether individuals are educated or not, we have assessed on the notion the aims of education by examining the various functions of education from the individual perspective.

Structure of discussion

The structure of the question can be set as a DYA type of question and you need to derive a stand for the question. The structure of discussion is set as followings:

1. Introduction
   1. General observation of this issue
   2. Perspectives of this issues – Thesis and anti-thesis
   3. Stand of this question – thesis
2. Main Body
   1. Opposing view – why the anti-thesis is correct
   2. Rebuttal – Prove why the opposing view is incorrect
   3. Supporting view 1 – one reason for the supporting view
   4. Supporting view 2 – one reason for the supporting view
   5. Supporting view 3 – one reason for the supporting view
3. Conclusion
4. Other Points to take note:

**Example on DYA Structure**

**Essay Question on Education**

**‘Many receive an education, but few are educated.’ Discuss with reference to situations in your society today.**

**Introduction**

**What to write for introduction:**

* Your observation on this issue – what you can understand from others about this issue – like the view from the society, the government or education institution
* Set the two perspectives on this issue – you can list it from different school of thoughts like liberal school or functional school of thoughts
* State your stand by repeating the question – like this essay is inclined to the view

**Main Body**

1. **Opposing View**
2. Set the linking sentence to indicate the opposing view
3. Set the main conceptualized idea
4. Set the elaboration of the paragraph

3.1

3.2

1. **Rebuttal**
2. Set the linking sentence to indicate the rebuttal
3. Set the conceptualized idea
4. Set the elaboration of the paragraph

3.1

3.2

1. **Supporting view 1, 2, 3**
2. Set the linking sentence to indicate that it is for supporting view
3. Set the conceptualized idea
4. Set the elaboration of the paragraph

3.1

3.2

**Conclusion**

**Essay Question on Education**

**‘Many receive an education, but few are educated.’ Discuss with reference to situations in your society today.**

Introduction

It is a conventional wisdom that education is of great significance to our development as a contributing and productive member of society. We pursue education with full devotion and dedication to ensure that we will be able to function well in the modern society. Though many receive education well in our modern learning institutions, few are said to be educated as they have not attained true aim aims of education as they are trained to be functional in our society but have not been enlightened by education to become a thinking person with proper values. It is in this aspect that individuals are not educated although they are educated in a formal educational institution. Given this controversial debate, this essay is more inclined to the view that few are educated despite many being educated.

Main Body

**Opposing View**

It is a common view that people are considered well-educated and have the competency when they have graduated from an university with a good degree.

**Rebuttal**

However, such a view lacks a holistic understanding on what is a well-educated intellectual as the educated person does not confine his development within what he can do as a productive worker but much more.

**Supporting view 1**

To be educated, one needs to develop their intellectual acumen to do reflection and make moral and ethical judgement on matters, deriving their opinions on matter.

It is also part of a fulfilling and enriched education when one develops his capacity to actualize his potentials to create a meaning career.

One is also considered educated when he has made development on his personality and capabilities, fulfilling his potentials which is not based on the assessment of the examination standard set by the formal education institution

Conclusion

In retrospect, education must be seen in terms a lifelong process and the yardstick to judge whether one is educated should be set beyond the standard of the formal education. The fulfilment and achievement of the education is not confined to examination as it is stretched beyond this. We need to examine other aspects of development of a person in his education process to conclude if he or she is educated or not.

**Example on structure on EOA**

**“It is increasingly difficult to tell right from wrong today.” How far do you agree?**

**Section Heading:** Introduction

**Tutor’s Instructions:**

1. Set the observation to give an overview of the subject

- Provide an explanation of the subjects

- Link the subjects with a yardstick on the issue of discussion

2. Set the proposition for discussion

3. Set the approach on how you would answer the extent of agreement to to the propoistio

**Tutor’s Answer:** With the contemporary explosion in information and information technology, the average Joe has never had more ideas to consider, more things to know, more “facts” at his fingertips. Some contend that this glut of information has made it more difficult to distinguish fact from fiction, to tell right from wrong. Perhaps, but the extent to which that is true depends on the strength of various assumptions. While the growth in information proliferation and the constancy of vested interests in content and dissemination would suggest that it is indeed harder to distinguish right from wrong today, the extent to which a reasonable man finds it challenging to do so, inasmuch as “right” and “wrong” can even be objectively delineated, depends on the strength of his discernment and the soundness of his intellectual habits of mind.

**Section Heading:** Proposition Point 1

**Tutor’s Instructions:** Explain why it is increasingly difficult to tell right from wrong.

* Discuss the problem of misinformation in today’s digital world and how the increase of such overwhelms digital readers and make it increasingly difficult to tell right from wrong.

Steps to write the paragraph:

1. Set the topic sentence - provide a conceptualised idea based on a category of discussion

2. Provide the elaboration - show how this idea can answer the question

3. Support with evidence - substantiate your point with an example

4. Conclude the paragraph - include a linking sentence to reiterate your view

**Tutor’s Answer:** It is increasingly difficult to tell right from wrong today as the amount of deliberate misinformation has substantially increased, making it more difficult to discern the accuracy of information.

- Alleged Russian interference in the 2016 US Presidential Election - spread of fake news to lower the credibility of presidential candidate Hillary Clinton

**Section Heading:** Extent of Agreement 1

**Tutor’s Instructions:** Provide why ‘Proposition Point 1’ is wrong

- Provide an argument why ‘Proposition Point 1’ is wrong.

- Students have to identify the point in the proposition point and prove it wrong.

\*Do not attempt to give another point - you are proving the supporting view if you do not argue against the proposition point.

**Tutor’s Answer:** However, this is only true to the extent that the increase in misinformation has been unprecedented. While techniques for misinformation have grown harder to detect, the intensity of organs’ misinformation efforts, and their determination to realise them, have been constant

- Yet, the dangers of false information on social media can be offset by popular expectation that misinformation will occur and that people are aware of the need to be vigilant against it

- In Jan 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) identified the anti-vaccination movement (‘anti-vaxxers’) as one of the greatest threats to world health - public awareness campaign on social media to combat misleading information

**Section Heading:** Proposition Point 2

**Tutor’s Instructions:** Explain why it is increasingly difficult to tell right from wrong.

- Discuss the problem of diverse opinions, especially those weighing on populist views and how these opinions affect make it difficult to differentiate between credible and non-credible opinions.

Steps to write the paragraph:

1. Set the topic sentence - provide a conceptualised idea based on a category of discussion

2. Provide the elaboration - show how this idea can answer the question

3. Support with evidence - substantiate your point with an example

4. Conclude the paragraph - include a linking sentence to reiterate your view

**Tutor’s Answer:** It is increasingly difficult to tell right from wrong today as opinions of uneven credibility and weight have proliferated with an ease and speed unique to our modern world, making it difficult to identify the credible and weighty opinions.

- Democratisation of media - anyone can become a content creator, regardless of the rigour or relevance of his or her views

- Roy Ngerng’s defamatory post on the Central Provident Fund (CPF) and the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC)

- Amos Yee’s critical remarks on the first PM of Singapore, LKY

- Steve Bannon & Breitbart News - far-right American news

**Section Heading:** Extent of Agreement 2

**Tutor’s Instructions:** Provide why ‘Proposition Point 2’ is wrong

- Students have to identify the point in the proposition point and prove it wrong.

\*Do not attempt to give another point - you are proving the supporting view if you do not argue against the proposition point.

**Tutor’s Answer:** However, this is only true to the extent that the explosion in opinions has been misleading instead of enriching. It is arguable that the growing diversity of views has also enabled viewers to cross-check information and verify the authenticity.

- fact-checking resources - Google News Initiative Verification Tools Course can be used to assess the accuracy of images, reports and videos that are found on social media sites

**Section Heading:** Proposition Point 3

**Tutor’s Instructions:** Explain how it is increasingly difficult to tell right from wrong

- Discuss the problem of advertisement and how the increase of digital advertisement crowds out objective information, making it difficult to distinguish between sponsored content and objective reporting.

Steps to write the paragraph:

1. Set the topic sentence - provide a conceptualised idea based on a category of discussion

2. Provide the elaboration - show how this idea can answer the question

3. Support with evidence - substantiate your point with an example

4. Conclude the paragraph - include a linking sentence to reiterate your view

**Tutor’s Answer:** It is increasingly difficult to tell right from wrong today as the explosive increase in scale and ingenuity of advertising makes it difficult to distinguish objective analysis from paid shilling. From advertorials, to media in cooperation with states, to paid studies and articles, it is difficult to distinguish objectively derived information and findings from information presented and often “created” to fulfil a commercial agenda.

**Section Heading:** Extent of Agreement 3

**Tutor’s Instructions:** Provide why ‘Proposition Point 3’ is wrong

- Students have to identify the point in the proposition point and prove it wrong.

\*Do not attempt to give another point - you are proving the supporting view if you do not argue against the proposition point.

**Tutor’s Answer:** However, this is only true to the extent that advertising necessarily comprises untruths or something “wrong”. Not all advertising is “wrong” or misleading, with some in fact allowing us to distinguish the superior features of products, as well as products from competitors, both of which are “right” or at least relatively objective information.

**Section Heading:** Conclusion

**Tutor’s Instructions:** Reiterate your stand on whether you agree or disagree with the question. Round up the discussion by providing a reflective statement.

**Tutor’s Answer:** In summary, the advancement and democratisation of social media have indeed made it difficult for people to distinguish right from wrong. Ultimately, the extent to which the reasonable man can distinguish right from wrong in this info-saturated world depends on his individual ability to exercise discernment and judgment, and the strength and utility of his habits of mind.