

[MYDIARY PODCAST SERIES]
[Writing Tips]

[Intro]

Hello and welcome to the wonderful world of Get Positive Audio.

You're listening to the MyDiary Podcast series.

I trust you will enjoy this audio presentation entitled "Writing Tips".

In this audio track you'll learn how build your writing skills to use both in your creative writing and essay work.

[Body]

Creative Writing is lots of fun, we can use our imagination to create a story, build a plot, and develop characters. Here are some questions to help you create an outline to begin your story:

- Choose a plot and write it down briefly.
- Develop a character that is easily recognizable by either something they say or how they look.
- Create a setting to capture interest immediately.
- Think about how the plot will get resolved.

Now try to incorporate as many of the following techniques to add dimensions to your story:

- Try to show your characters' emotions, feelings, personality and inner thoughts.
- It's always entertaining when you have humour as well as seriousness in a story.
- Use detail in the scenes and in the characters you are describing.
- Try to mirror-image the characteristics of real people in your story: make them go through mood swings, emotions, contradictions, so that the characters are not totally good or totally evil.
- Try to write the conversation just like it would actually sound, incorporating accents and slang words.
- Always leave one question unanswered until the last paragraph of the story.

- Try to write in a unique way avoiding clichés and typical descriptions and sayings.
- Try not to state the obvious; instead show the reader what you want through descriptions of movements instead of telling them ie: don't say someone is sad - instead describe the down turned lips on their face.
- Use the length of your sentence to set the pace of the story. i.e. short sentences for fast actions or scenes and long sentences for slow actions or scenes.
- Try to have more than one thing happening at once in a story.
- And lastly, use all senses to describe things.

How To Write A Formal Analytical Essay

Formal essays involve a different style of writing to creative writing. An essay is a well researched and logically structured answer to a particular question, or questions. They are a method of examination, by which a student presents his/her knowledge of the subject. Here is an outline of the components of an essay:

The Essay Question

Teachers like to set tricky essay questions. They can be hard to understand and decipher. It is important that you spend some time analyzing what the question is asking you to do.

Here are some tips:

1) Read the essay question carefully

Read it slowly and out loud to yourself so you can become familiar with the question.

2) Underline the key words and check their meaning

Use a dictionary if you have to look up some of the words. Refer to the information section at the back of MyDiary under Essay Tips for a breakdown of the meaning of some common key words.

They include:

- **Summarise**
This means to sum up; give the main points briefly.
- **Evaluate**
This means to give the good points and the bad ones and your own opinion on the issue.
- **Explain**
Make clear; interpret; make plain; tell “how” to do.
- **Compare**
Bring out the points of similarity (and points of difference).
- **Contrast**
Bring out the points of difference.
- **Discuss**
Talk over; consider from various points of view.
- **And criticise**
State your opinion of the correctness or value of an item or issue.

By having a clearer focus of what the essay is asking you to do, you now have a better focus to gather information.

Gathering Information For Your Essay

Research the topic by extracting the information from your class notes, library or internet. Remember to reference the materials you used.

The next component of an essay is:

The Introduction

The introduction is the opening part of your essay. The first paragraph in your essay should:

- Demonstrate that you understand the question.

- Clarify any difficult parts of the topic.
- Include the “courtesy” details: the genre, the text’s name and the name of the writer or director.
- State your proposition or thesis. This is your opinion on the topic i.e. where you position yourself in terms of your reading of the text in response to the question.
- Broadly outline the approach you will take with your argument i.e. how you will proceed in order to persuade the reader.
- Do not be too detailed - save this for the body of your essay.

Now we are up to the:

Body of the Essay

Each paragraph in the body of your essay should:

1. Have a topic sentence which contains the main idea of the paragraph. This sentence may be your first assertion or claim which attempts to prove your thesis.
2. Provide evidence or examples from the text to support your claims. Make sure that this evidence is specific and relevant. You can do this by quoting or paraphrasing the text.
3. Explain the relevance of this evidence, connecting it directly with the essay question. Often this part of the paragraph requires the most attention.
4. Link to your thesis and the next paragraph.

At the final part of the essay is the:

Conclusion

The last paragraph should:

- Briefly summarise the main ideas or assertions which were developed in the body of the essay.
- Consolidate or reaffirm your thesis or proposition of paragraph one. In other words, this means that you would rephrase it.

- In some instances, evaluate the consequences of your thesis, or discuss the importance of your findings.

You can use Transitional Words to ensure that your essay is more coherent. These are words like:

- therefore
- nevertheless
- in addition
- furthermore

They help paragraphs connect with each other. You can view the full list in the Information section in MyDiary

Common Essay Errors

There are 3 common error students make when writing essays, these are padding, weak development and choppiness.

To Avoid:

- **Padding your essay**
State your main point and stick to it. Avoid all nonessential information.
- **To avoid weak development**
Develop at least three main points in detail using examples and/or statistics.
- **And to avoid choppiness**
Use transitional words to ensure your essay is more coherent.

Last but not least, it is essential to proofread your work. A lot of marks are allocated to grammar and spelling. Write in full sentence paragraphs. Avoid shorthand, dot points, side headings and abbreviations. Here are some tips for catching editing mistakes:

- **Be aware of your bad habits.**

If there are types of errors you know you tend to make, double check for those first.

- **Read one word at a time.**

Be sure to read what is actually on the page, not what you think is there.

- **Read very very s l o w l y.**

When you read normally, you see only the first and last few letters. You “fix your eyes” on the print only three or four times per line, or less. You take in the words between your fixation points with your peripheral vision, which gets less accurate the farther it is from the point. The average reader can only take in six letters accurately with one fixation. This means you have to fix your eyes on almost every word you have written and do it twice for longer words, in order to proofread accurately. You have to look at the word, not slide over it

- **Read out loud.**

You are more likely to hear a mistake such as repeating or omitting words. This is because you are using two senses, seeing and hearing, and you are forced to slow down. This keeps you conscious of every word.

- **Proofread more than once.**

Try reading your essay more than once leaving a space (preferably a day) between each time you go through it.

- **If possible ask friends/parents/siblings to check it too.**

It is harder to detect mistakes in your own work than in someone else's.

[Closing]

Thank you for listening to this podcast.

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I wish you all the best with your studies.

Until next time, Stay Positive!

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