



— The Learning Lab's Guide —

5 Ways to Master Expository Writing

THE LEARNING LAB



An Introduction: The Expository Essay

This formal essay format is one that students often find intimidating. Although it is briefly introduced to students in primary school, many students are unsure of how to structure and write an expository essay.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF AN EXPOSITORY ESSAY?

The expository essay seeks to inform the reader about a particular subject or issue. It is a common essay type seen in secondary school which requires students to move away from narrative writing.

The structure of an expository essay is as important as its content. In order to excel at expository writing, students will need to engage in proper planning of the thesis, main points, evidence and conclusion. A thesis outlines the main proposition or idea of the essay and should address the key topic seen in the expository essay question. It is the thread that ties the entire essay together.

5 Ways to Master Expository Writing

This guide offers insights from Jenna Wong, our Head of Secondary English at United Square, on 5 basic ways to master expository writing.

1

Understand the Structure Of an Expository Essay

2

Identify the Requirements Of the Question

3

Establish an Effective Essay Map

4

Set the Right Tone in the Introduction

5

Craft a Great Content Paragraph

Understand the Structure Of an Expository Essay

An expository essay is comprised of 3 main parts:

An introduction

The content body

A conclusion

WHAT IS AN INTRODUCTION?

The introduction gives readers an overview of how the main topic or idea of the expository essay question will be addressed. This includes definitions or an analysis of the key terms given in the question.

Definitions help the reader understand the parameters within which the writer discusses main ideas. Should students begin to write out of point, they can refer back to the definitions they've set for themselves.

Additionally, an introduction includes the thesis statement which responds directly to the question and outlines the points that will be covered in the essay.

WHAT IS THE MAIN CONTENT OF AN EXPOSITORY ESSAY?

The content paragraphs form the main 'body' of the essay. Each paragraph will explain and elaborate on one key point that responds to the essay question.

Students are typically expected to write three content paragraphs for each expository essay.

WHAT IS THE CONCLUSION?

The concluding paragraph wraps up the entire essay and reminds readers about what was developed in the essay.

Great essays also end off with a 'wow' factor that will set readers thinking about the topic that has been discussed.

Identify the Requirements Of the Question

An easy way to understand the requirements of the question is to analyse the key words in the question.

LOOKING AT THE DIRECTIVE WORD

It is important to identify the directive word in the essay question, as it will confirm that the essay is indeed an expository essay, and not a descriptive or an argumentative essay.

Identifying the directive word ensures that students meet the question requirements of the expository essay. Common directive words for expository essays include: “what”, “explain”, “identify”, and “outline”. Each directive word signals the way students should approach the essay.

EXPLAINING ADDITIONAL KEY WORDS

Apart from identifying the directive word in the question, it is important for students to identify and analyse other key words in the question.

Students should be mindful of seemingly insignificant words that change the scope of the question. Such words include “you”, “some”, “majority” and “today”.

These words have a great impact on how the content should be written. For example, the word “you” requires students to take on a strong personal voice. Hence, students may cite personal observations that are tied to facts in the content paragraphs.

IMPLICATIONS OF KEY WORDS

Upon identifying these key words, it is also important for students to consider the meaning and implications each word has.

For example, the key word “change” requires students to think about the concept of comparison — identifying change between two different time periods or situations and identifying the turning point.

Furthermore, students need to think about whether this “change” has a positive or negative impact on the situation.

Establish an Effective Essay Map

An essay map is a plan that will guide students in writing their essays. Specific to the expository essay, an essay map should have three topic sentences that outline the three points of the essay.

Moreover, students can also cite examples that they may use to support each point. When crafting the essay map, it is important to ensure that each point answers every key word in the given essay question.

WHY IS AN ESSAY MAP IMPORTANT?

Having an essay map planned out before writing the essay helps students develop a logical piece of work that shows depth of thought.

Taking time to write out the essay map will ensure that students have a firm plan to constantly refer back to while writing the essay. The essay map is an extremely valuable tool to help students avoid writing off topic.



Set the Right Tone in the Introduction

Using the right tone in the introduction is about choosing the right writing technique. With the right tone, students will be able to write compelling and relevant introductions to their essays.

CHOOSING A GOOD WRITING TECHNIQUE

There is a wide variety of writing techniques students can use to begin their essays. These include using an anecdote, a quote, an observation of society, a fact or even a statistic related to the topic at hand.

See the following example below where two techniques, “Using a Fact” and “Using a Quote” are used.

SAMPLE ESSAY TOPIC: THE ELDERLY

Using a Fact	In 2014, Singapore’s prime minister Lee Hsien Loong paid tribute to the pioneer generation of Singaporeans for their contribution to nation-building and announced a slew of additional medical benefits for this group of the elderly.
Using a Quote	“Youth is wasted on the young,” the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw famously wrote.

Some students may choose to use a personal anecdote at the start of their expository essays. This method is easy to use as students can write about any personal experience linked to the topic in the question. Furthermore, it puts a personal touch on the essay and makes it unique.

See the following example below, which uses an anecdote to begin the introduction for an essay which covers the topic, “The Elderly”.

“Every Saturday, my family members gather at my grandmother’s house for dinner. You can imagine that as there are 18 of us there every week without fail, we create quite a ruckus. My sprightly grandmother will always be busy preparing our favourite dishes for us.”

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Students should try out different techniques to find out what comes most naturally to them. Constant practise will make each introduction precise and engaging, allowing students to hone their writing skills and accuracy of expression.

Craft a Great Content Paragraph

There are four simple parts in each content paragraph: the topic sentence, the elaboration, the example/evidence and the sum up. This is known as the TEES structure.

Topic Sentence

THE MAIN POINT

The topic sentence conveys the main point of the paragraph. This highlights the content that is to come in the paragraph. It is important to ensure that each topic sentence is clear and that it addresses every part of the question.

Elaboration

A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE TOPIC SENTENCE

Students are required to state, in greater detail, what has been asserted in the topic sentence. It must be shown that the point being made is logical. This will also help the reader gain a better understanding of the context in which the point is being made.

Example/Evidence

ELEMENTS THAT SUPPORT THE MAIN POINT

Real life examples prove that a student's point can be applied to reality and that it is not made up. Therefore, it is important that the examples are made up of facts, quotes or events reported in the news. Students should highlight the significance of the example in how it advocates their points.

Sum Up:

A STRONG THAT RECAPS THE MAIN POINT

Before the content paragraph is rounded off, students should demonstrate that what they have written is relevant to the topic sentence and that it addresses the question. This creates a coherent end to the content paragraph.

Secondary School English Unlocked — Help Your Child Thrive

Secondary school English can be tough to manage without the right guidance and support.

In our lessons, your child will learn the key strategies to manage every major examinable component with carefully-planned curriculum taught by teachers who understand how secondary school students learn best.

By equipping our students with the key skills to understand, analyse and respond to question requirements, we help them build essential critical reading and language analysis skills for precise, cohesive writing.

Find out more about our Secondary English programmes at www.thelearninglab.com.sg or by calling 6733 8711.

Ready for School Ready for Life



We're committed to helping each and every student fulfil his or her greatest potential.

With the right knowledge, skills and dispositions, we empower each student to tackle the tests in school and in life.

If you are interested to find out more about our teaching and learning framework or about our programmes, feel free to drop us an email at enquiry@thelearninglab.com.sg or call us at 6733 8711.

CONTACT US

thelearninglab.com.sg

 [thelearninglab](https://www.instagram.com/thelearninglab)

 [TheLearningLabSingapore](https://www.facebook.com/TheLearningLabSingapore)