

Do's and Don'ts in Writing E-Quip Essays

Presentation

Do	Don't
... observe rules of spelling, grammar, syntax and punctuation. Use a software checker if necessary. Set the language proofing option to your local use of English. Marks will be deducted for insufficient technical care in the text.	... use words unless you are sure how these are spelled and placed in sentences to best effect. Don't ignore the technical rules of English literacy. Attention to these help or hinder understanding in your reader, or in this case, your tutor.
... present your essay with structured headings, clearly distinguishable from the text. Use paragraphs and indents to facilitate ease of reading and understanding. Use page numbering for reference. Use legible fonts ... either Aptos, Calibri, Arial, but not the over used Times New Roman. Use "Chicago A" for citations in footnotes and bibliographies. Keep inline quotations to the absolute minimum.	... jumble sentences together in chaotic order. How you think creatively should not be how you write. Write coherently and in an orderly sequence of thought. Don't vary fonts within the text for supposed effect; it merely distracts.
Write lucidly and plainly, respecting the genre and style of essay writing. Choose short simple wording where possible. Use the active voice. Create fluency through transitions. Read through your finished work several times, making amendments as you go.	... lapse into rhetorical flourishes, verbosity, waffle, padding and unrestrained exuberance. These irritate assessors and depress your grades.

Addressing the Question and Preparing to Write

Do	Don't
... meditate calmly and with clear focus on the question, interrogating its meaning for the goal of your essay.	... rush into the essay before you have begun even to understand what it is both asking from you and what it is NOT asking from you.
... plan your study centred on the scope of the question. Take notes, bookmark sites, build a mind map structure of your essay when you have assembled the material. Try this free online service (3 private mind maps that can be deleted and recycled): https://coggle.it/home	... just do some unfocused reading and then think that you are ready to write. In that case you are almost certainly not ready to write! The final quality of an essay depends to a large degree on the thoroughness of your preparation.
... return to the question, your structure and content when research is largely finished. Are all three working in harmony in your mind? If not, revise, refine and edit your notes and reasoning.	... accept uncritically whatever comes into your head. Return to the question, your structure and content again and again before you start writing. Don't take shortcuts. Don't sell yourself short!

Writing Begins!

Do	Don't
... stick to the plan, trust that your essay structure is going to give you the most balanced coverage of the topic. Each argument that you make should be formatted in the style of PEEL: state your Point, present your Evidence (footnote), Explain your point, then Link it back to the question that you are answering.	... go on long tangents that extend a point longer than its welcome. Sections should have a beginning, middle and end which show reasonable engagement with the sources that you have researched. You should write in an ordered way, rather than the way you would think about the subject in your head.
... present points of view that you disagree with in a generous way. There is no need to challenge a point of view that you present as ridiculous in the first place. Once you have done so, address it head on with your response, and cite sources to help make your case.	... ignore ideas that you disagree with or use 'ad hominem' arguments to discredit sources that you do not agree with. Critical engagement with academia requires allowing an argument to make its case fully before being refuted by your own argument.
... write your introduction and conclusion to be concise and not introducing any points. The introduction should place the context of the essay in the wider world and then state the aims of the essay e.g. ... <i>"The truth of the bodily resurrection of Christ is a core belief for Christianity and is at the centre of its identity. This essay will evaluate the resurrection claims of the early church and its critics".</i> The conclusion should briefly summarise the points in the essay and point back outward into the world e.g. ... <i>"Whilst critics of a bodily resurrection rightly point out inconsistencies in eyewitness accounts, they cannot account for the explosive popularity of Christianity or the brutal martyrdoms of the people they claim made it all up. Inconsistencies in accounts regularly occur in investigations and their diversity points to the truth of the events they have in common. Christianity continues to be a convincing religion because its creation was not the result of a hoax".</i>	... start making points and arguments in your introduction. The introduction should strictly be concerned with establishing the purpose of the essay. The introduction ideally should be as short as possible due to a small word count. The conclusion should also not introduce new points or language. Try your best to summarise what you have said in the essay in a sentence or two, maybe one for each section.