

## English Academic Essay Writing: A Brief Checklist

- **First get lots of ideas down on paper in no particular order by BRAINSTORMING**
- **Next PLAN the organization of your essay in detail before beginning to write**
- **Then write your essay out in full, but think of it only as the first DRAFT**
- **When you have written your first draft, CHECK the following points carefully.**

### **A. FOCUS** (*Like a photograph, an essay needs both to have a good subject and be well focused.*)

1. Does your essay have both a clear **THEME** and a clear **POSITION**?
2. Is there any material in the essay that is **IRRELEVANT** to your theme?
3. Are there any statements in the essay that are **INCONSISTENT** with your position?

### **B. FORM** (*Essays are written in paragraphs that begin on a new line and are indented.*)

1. Does your essay have a **TITLE** that indicates your theme and/or your position?
2. Is your essay written in **PARAGRAPHS** that represent successive steps in the argument?
3. Does each paragraph have its own **TOPIC**, usually indicated in a topic sentence?
4. Does your essay begin with an **INTRODUCTORY** paragraph that tries to engage the reader, states your theme & position, and perhaps explains the organization or methodology of the essay?
5. Does each **BODY** paragraph include adequate supporting material, in the form of examples, illustrations, or other evidence?
6. Does your essay end with a **CONCLUDING** paragraph that summarizes the main point(s) you have covered in the essay and emphasizes the main conclusion(s)?

### **C. LANGUAGE** (*Especially if English is not your native language, you are likely to make quite a few errors in grammar, vocabulary and spelling. Try at least to avoid BASIC errors.*)

1. Have you checked the spelling of unfamiliar words carefully in a dictionary?
2. Is the spelling of words that occur several times in the essay consistent?
3. When you found new words in a dictionary, did you check their grammar as well as meaning?
4. Is your use of verb tenses appropriate and consistent throughout the essay?
5. Are there any slips in subject-verb agreement, or the use of singular and plural?
6. Are your paragraphs always written in sentences (i.e. no fragments or run-ons)?

### **D. CITATION** (*An Academic essay should tell the reader its sources of original information and ideas. You do not need to give sources for common knowledge or common sense, but you should allow the reader to check the specialized information and specialist comment that you make use of.*)

1. Does your essay have a **LIST OF SOURCES** showing where all the new information and ideas come from?
2. Does your essay have a series of **NOTES** that make clear where each particular item of information/expression of an idea comes from?
3. Have you included a source note whenever you **SUMMARIZE**, **PARAPHRASE**, or **QUOTE**?
4. Have you used **SUMMARY**, **PARAPHRASING**, and **QUOTATION** appropriately?

- **If you can, get someone you trust to read the draft and make SUGGESTIONS**
- **Then REVISE the essay to produce the next/final draft**