

Tips for writing the essay exam in Business English I and II

“How many words do I have to write in the exam?”

This is no doubt the most commonly asked questions from first semester Business English students. Our answer: write what is relevant to the assignment. That is, write until you have fully developed and supported your argument or position. Whether you are describing a graph in the first semester exam or discussing a business topic in the second, structure should guide your writing and not a word count. Regardless of language, subject or length all strong essays share three aspects in common: introduction, main body and conclusion.

The first paragraph of your essay is the introduction, which should present a clear and concise topic or thesis statement. This statement should set the tone of your essay and tell the reader how you interpret the subject matter. Likewise, the first paragraph acts as a road map for your paper showing the reader where you plan on taking them.

The following two or three paragraphs make up the main body which serves to support your position. Each paragraph in the main body must have a logical connection to the topic/thesis statement. To create clarity and focus limit each paragraph to one general idea and explain how or why this idea supports the topic statement. However you choose to organize your essay it is important that the ideas in each paragraph are clear and support the main topic of the essay.

Additionally, good paragraphs have a logical structure and are fully developed. This means starting with a topic sentence that clarifies the main point of the paragraph, presenting examples or evidence to support it and then transitioning to the next paragraph. Every sentence in a paragraph must logically build upon the other. Likewise, to make it easier for the reader to follow your flow of thought you should indent the first line of your paragraph or leave a blank space between them. This helps the reader see that you are changing to a new idea.

It is also a good idea to use transitions. Transitions are words or phrases that help the reader follow your logical progression of thought. *Moreover, therefore, next, however* and *in conclusion* are examples of transitions. They introduce new ideas, signal relationships between ideas and prevent an abrupt, choppy rhythm that lurches from one idea to the next. Without transitions the structure of your essay may be unclear and difficult to read.

The final paragraph of your essay is the conclusion, and it will often leave the most immediate impression on your reader because it is the last portion to be read. Therefore, the concluding paragraph should be more than a simple restatement of your thesis, it should support your thesis in light of the evidence you present in the essay.

Furthermore, new ideas or questions should not be introduced in the conclusion because they often interrupt the flow of your essay and ultimately distract the reader from your concluding thoughts. Restate why the topic is important, briefly synthesize the information you presented in the essay and then finally review your thesis.

To sum up, a well written essay exam has a clear and concise statement that leaves no doubt about the subject of the essay. It is logically organized with fully developed paragraphs that advance a writer's thoughts, and it is written with transitions to help the reader follow the focus and thought of the writer. In the end, structure helps the student show that he or she knows the material enough to make a critical judgement and not just recite a random collection of unrelated details.