IIT ROORKEE

NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

EFFECTIVE WRITING

Lecture 07: Essay Writing

BINOD MISHRA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Historical Background

- Origin- Old French word ‘essai’ meaning trial or attempt
- Association with Latin term ‘ exagium’- to weigh
- Popularized by French philosopher and statesman, Michel de Montaigne in 1580.
- A composition in prose form on a variety of topics
- Other stalwarts of essay include Francis Bacon, Abrahm Cowley, William Temple, John Dryden, Daniel Defoe, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Dr. Johnson followed by Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, Arnold, and many more.

What the Stalwarts Say

- ‘grains of salt which will rather give an appetite than offend with satiety.’ (Bacon)
- ‘ lose sally of mind; an irregular and indigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition. (Dr. Johnson)

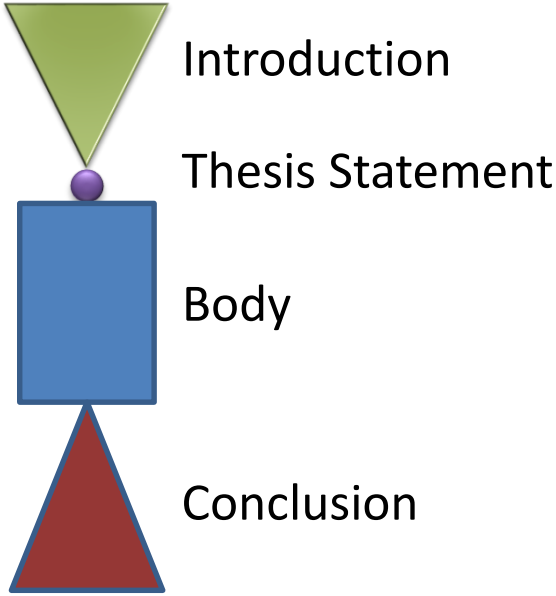
Organization

- Collection of paragraphs
- All paragraphs to have unity
- Every paragraph must have one subject or theme
- An irrelevant paragraph has no room in an essay

✓ Good manners are also important when you are with your own friends. When you speak to anyone, speak clearly and sufficiently loudly for the person to hear. It is an insult to a person to ask his attention and then speak so that he does not understand you. And remember it is your responsibility to make yourself understood.

(J.C. Hill, Good Manners)

Components of An Essay



Thesis Statement

- A good thesis statement should blend several ideas into just one or two sentences.
- It also includes the topic of the essay.
- It should clarify the author's stand with regard to the topic.

- It reveals the topic to the reader
- It mirrors a judgment about the topic
- It provides the reader with a idea of what is to come in the paper

Division

- Introduction
- Brief
- Abrupt beginning
- Prepare the reader for what's about to come
- Prompts the reader towards the main statement or thesis statement
- Captivating

Contd.

- There was once a young man who was strong and healthy and enjoyed his work. In every way he felt on top of life, and had no sympathy for the uninteresting folk who seemed to form such a large proportion of the population. One day he got an attack of influenza. He had had it before and paid little attention to it, but this time he developed pneumonia and was dangerously ill. When he recovered he could only move slowly. (Good Manners)

The Body

The body of an essay includes a group of sentences that relate to a specific topic or idea around the main point of the essay. It is important to write and organize two to three full body paragraphs to properly develop it.

- Supports other paragraphs and development of the topic
- Organize the main ideas in logical order (time, place, importance)
- Plan out each body paragraph by listing major details that support each main idea
- Order the details within each paragraph in a logical way. Each body paragraph may end with a concluding sentence.

Attaining Unity

- Relevancy : confine to the topic
- Proportion: create balance, subdivide the topic
- Arrangement: ensure order

Conclusion

- Provide a logical and convincing statement that sums up the main idea.
- Avoid adding any new information in the conclusion.
- Sustain your readers interest.
- Leave an impression on the readers
- Recapitulate or restate the main point.
- Leave a lasting impression on the reader's mind.

A Sample Conclusion

Good manners come from having sympathy with others and from understanding our limitations. 'The Truth' is too big for any one of us to understand. 'The truth' as we see it is only our truth and part of a larger truth. We should always realize that we are humble, unimportant little people on this earth and try to help the world as much as we can in our short time here. ' I expect to pass through this world but once. any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any creature , let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

(Good Manners, J.C.Hill)

Summing up

There is no knowledge so hard to acquire as the knowledge of how to live this life well and naturally.

- Montaigne

Thank You