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Introduction

How many students dread the day they have to hand in their essays? Possibly most of them. Students delay that day until the very last minute, because the task ahead of them seems so daunting. And the task seems so daunting because most students are ill-prepared to write 2000 words or 3000 words on a topic selected not by them, but by their professor or their teacher.

The result is usually a hurried affair, showing poor structure, poor grammar, and poor marks resulting.

And yet the task of writing a good essay is not more involved than the task of writing a bad essay—probably about an extra hour's work at the most would be involved. And that hour could result in perhaps double the marks.

It's not just good luck that some students appear gifted when it comes to the task of writing winning essays. The difference lies in their preparation, and the time they spend planning their assignments each time,

Easy Guide to Writing Winning Essays

and in the time they devote to constructing the essay in a sensible, logical way, showing steady progression of ideas, so the subject evolves.

The task of writing good essays is not beyond the average student. Provided, that is, the student wants to achieve good marks for his or her effort, and provided the student is prepared to learn.

I have lost count of the students who have enrolled in my Writing Winning Essays course and have not even bothered to take note of the points I have made for their benefit. They repeat the same mistakes over and over in each subsequent essay. Is it any wonder that these students never seem to get marks above a very meagre ‘pass’ grade?

Yet others are keen to learn—indeed, most are very keen to learn from their mistakes. After all, if they learn something from writing one essay, the task of writing the next essay is so much easier.

The idea of your teacher or professor getting you to write essays has more than one purpose. It’s to help develop your research methods. It’s to help you think logically—and all good essays should be thought out logically. But the reason is also to help you develop

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writing skills that are of a very high level, skills that will equip you well when you have finished your course and join the workforce.

And if you can write well during the early years of your career, then you can expect to be, or rather should be, rewarded for your skills with higher salary, faster promotion.

And if you do develop those writing skills that are so essential in your career, there's a very good chance you will stand out from the others in your office, laboratory or department.

Your teacher or professor will notice your efforts at writing winning essays. Your supervisor in later life will admire you for these same skills. Now is the time to learn how to write winning essays!

Chapter 1 What's It About?

This little book will help you work your way successfully through the essays that form an important part of many of your subjects in your chosen course.

Writing essays is an important part of any university or college qualification. A large portion of term or semester marks are awarded for the way you, the student, write essays. A good essay means good marks, higher grades, and so on. You get the message!

This book will help you prepare winning essays that will earn you excellent marks. I won't be writing the essays for you, but I will show you how to write an essay that will reward you for your efforts.

The good news is that writing a good essay is not much harder than writing a bad one. Only the marks you would get for each type would be different.

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Having got to your present level of studies, I assume you have a reasonable command of the English language. I can't teach you grammar and make you a good speller. But through this book I can work with the skills you have and teach you how to develop your essay-writing talents.

The level of skills you attain after reading this book is partly up to how you apply what I have shown you. But I do expect your marks will improve significantly, based on my past experience at helping other students learn the art of good essay writing.

Essay writing is, really, quite easy. As I mentioned, it is not much harder to write a good essay than it is to write a bad one.

Unlike with conversation where we have the benefit of hand movements, facial expressions and posture to get our message across to a listener, an essay must be clear in the words that we write. And unlike a conversation where we can repeat something we have just said—several times, and at a simpler level if necessary, with essays, no such privilege is permitted.

Unlike with conversational English, where the speaker can cover a dozen topics in a dozen sentences, rapidly changing from one subject to the next, an essay

What's It About?

must be clear, concise, well ordered and logical in its flow and treatment from the start.

You will delete all repetition. You will delete all clichés—those useless, worn-out phrases that mean little. And delete any word that doesn't add anything to the work. And then see if you can delete even further. In other words, there will be no repetition, no padding out the paragraphs or pages hoping your lecturer or tutor won't know what you are trying to do. The result will be good, clear, clean copy that says ... well, exactly what you were asked to say.

Unlike other writing we may be engaged in, like writing for a newspaper or a newsletter, where we will have an interest in what we are telling the readers, many essays are about subjects we might know very little about. After all, that's one of the reasons why the topics are set—so you, the student, can acquire the skills necessary to research the material, come up with all the facts that are pertinent to your point of view, and then put them in a clear, logical order. And hopefully learn about another topic in the process.

You might (like just about every other student who has ever attended university or college) consider essays

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as complete @#*&\$! At first you're probably right. But they serve a worthwhile purpose, believe it or not. They teach you analytical skills. They teach you writing skills. And they teach you how to express yourself clearly. And they're important to train you in research methods. All of these are things you will need to use after you graduate or go on to do higher study.

Having got a job using your degree or diploma, you will be expected to write discussion papers or persuasive arguments to put up to committees who will want something clear to discuss. The committee members will want facts, not waffle. The skills you acquire in learning to write essays will be more valuable than you might realise right now.

Even ten years after graduation, you will need to know how to look up relevant facts in the library, know what is good value and what is written trash. You will need to know what you can rely on and particularly what you cannot rely on at all for your source material. I don't like to take the side of your professors or your teachers, but just this once, they do, I hate to admit, know what they are doing.

Here are some points that will help you.

What's It About?

You can learn to write good essays. Please believe it.

You can remove the procrastination and write them early in the semester, not the night before you are due to present them. That, too, is true. I'm a journalist—would I lie to you?

You can always get enough material to write about. Everything you need to know is there, in your library. As I said, I'm a journalist ...

And you can learn to present your essay so it is neat, tidy, and shows the required level of professionalism your lecturer would expect from you. You are, after all, at quite a high level in your education, so make the most of what you have achieved so far.