

TIPS FOR WRITING SHORT ESSAYS

Short essays usually involve answering a question related to course content and could be anywhere from 200 words to 750 words long, depending on the professor's guidelines. The most challenging part of writing a short essay is the length, as you need to select the **most important** information to cover.

STEPS

1. What are you asked to do?
 - Consider the question you have to answer/discuss.
 - See if it can be broken into parts; make sure to cover each part in your answer.
2. Brainstorm the arguments and points you feel would best answer the question.
3. Choose two or three of the strongest points; develop a supporting point/example/reference/argument for each.
4. Create an outline to structure these points and link them to the supporting information.

5. Write a draft:

INTRODUCTION

- Get straight to the point.
- Introduce your thesis (main argument); incorporate the language of the question to frame your thesis.
- Include a sentence that previews the points you will discuss.
- Keep it short.
- Be specific.
- Provide minimal contextual detail.

ARGUMENT

- Stay on topic.
- Deal with points in the same order as they are listed in your preview sentence.
- Use a clear topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph to introduce and summarize the paragraph's point.
- Ensure that the key words in the topic sentence echo the words used in your preview sentence so that the reader can see where and how your argument is progressing.
- Use sentences, not bulleted points.

QUOTATIONS

- Choose quotations carefully—only use them if they really back up your points, and do not quote too much (5-10% of paper at most).
- Avoid using block quotations for an essay of this length.
- Always document your sources, even if they came from class readings.

CONCLUSION

- Briefly sum up your argument and relate it to your thesis.

6. Revise and edit your draft:

- Be direct and concise; remove wordiness and repetition; make every word count.
- Stick to your topic: if there is an idea in your paper that doesn't serve to answer the question or strengthen your points, remove it.
- Check grammar and punctuation by reading the draft aloud.
- Ensure you have documented all sources fully and correctly.