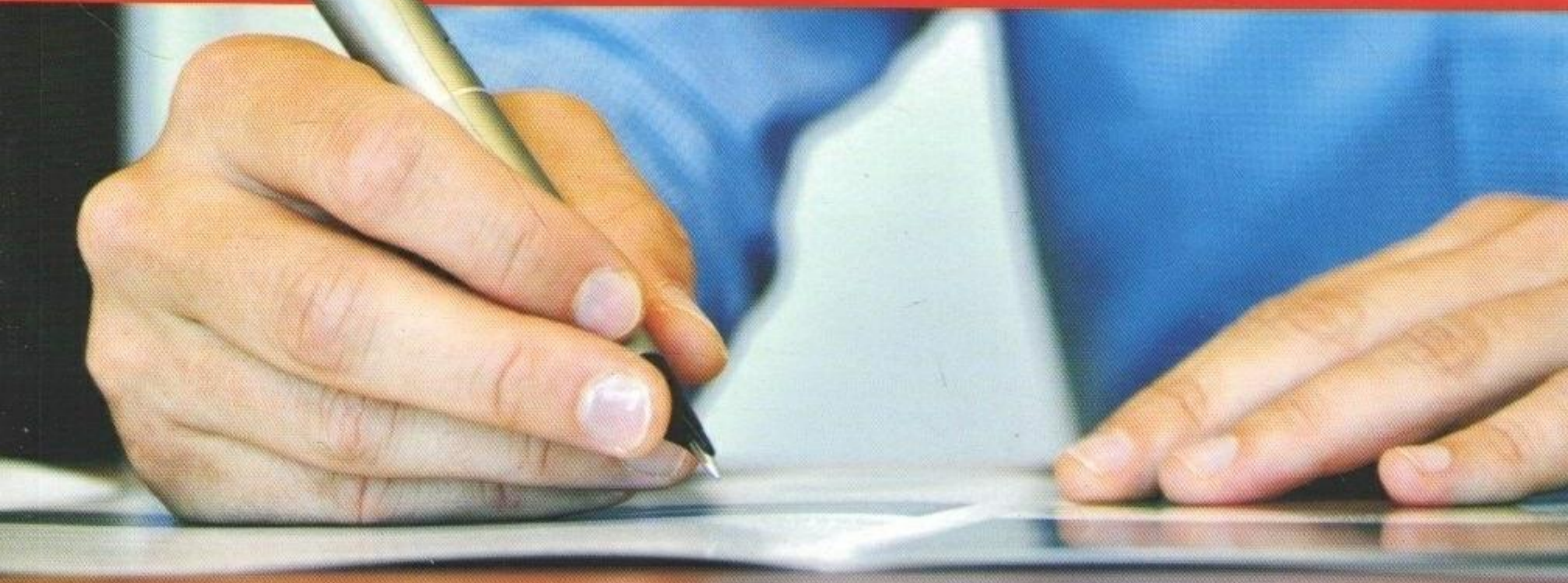


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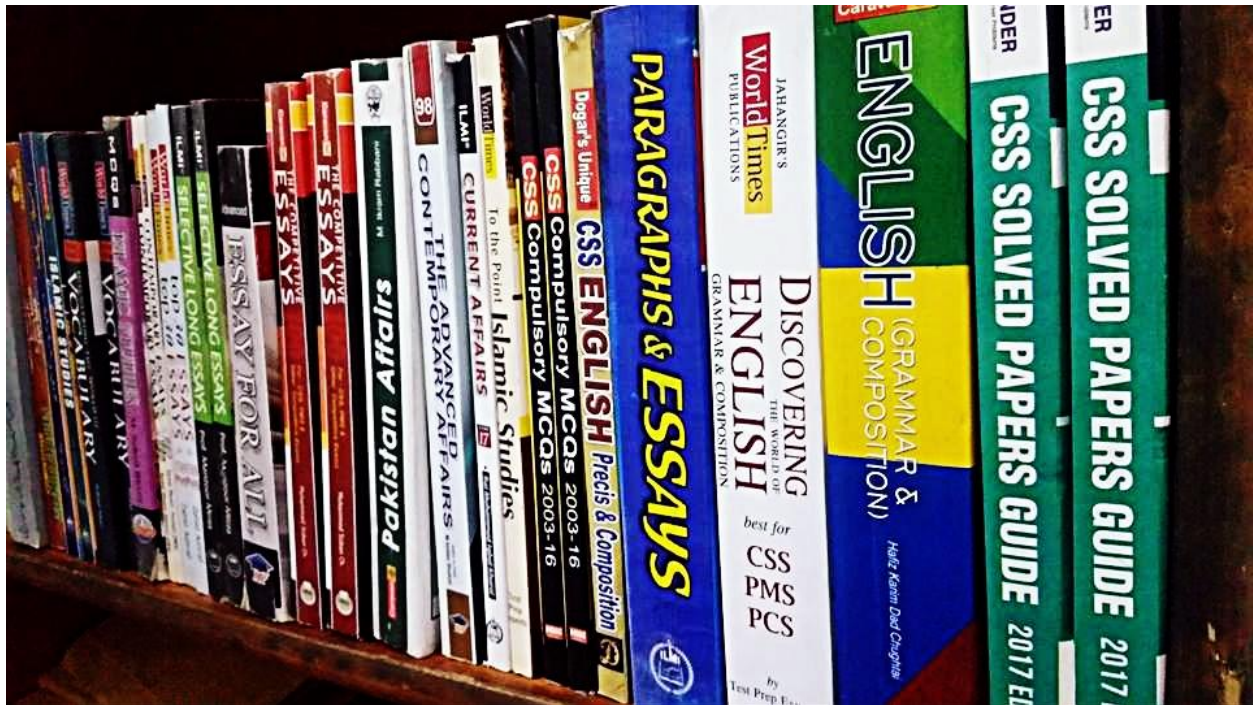
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HOW TO WRITE A GOOD ESSAY

HOW TO WRITE A GOOD ESSAY?

What is an Essay?

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the "essay" as:

"a literary composition on any subject, usually in prose and short."

Whereas in the Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary, "essay" has been defined as:

"a trial; a written composition, less elaborate than a treatise."

Etymologically essay means:

"to weigh, to balance."

Essay is the product of our:

- (i) Reading;
- (ii) Observation;
- (iii) Thinking;
- (iv) Practice.

Classification of Essays:

It is difficult to bound an essay in any class as it is impossible to define personality whose reflection the essay is. Roughly, however, an essay may be divided into four classes:

- (i) Descriptive Essays;
- (ii) Narrative Essays;
- (iii) Reflective Essays; and
- (iv) Argumentative or Expository Essays.

(i) Descriptive Essays:

Descriptive Essays paint a picture of:

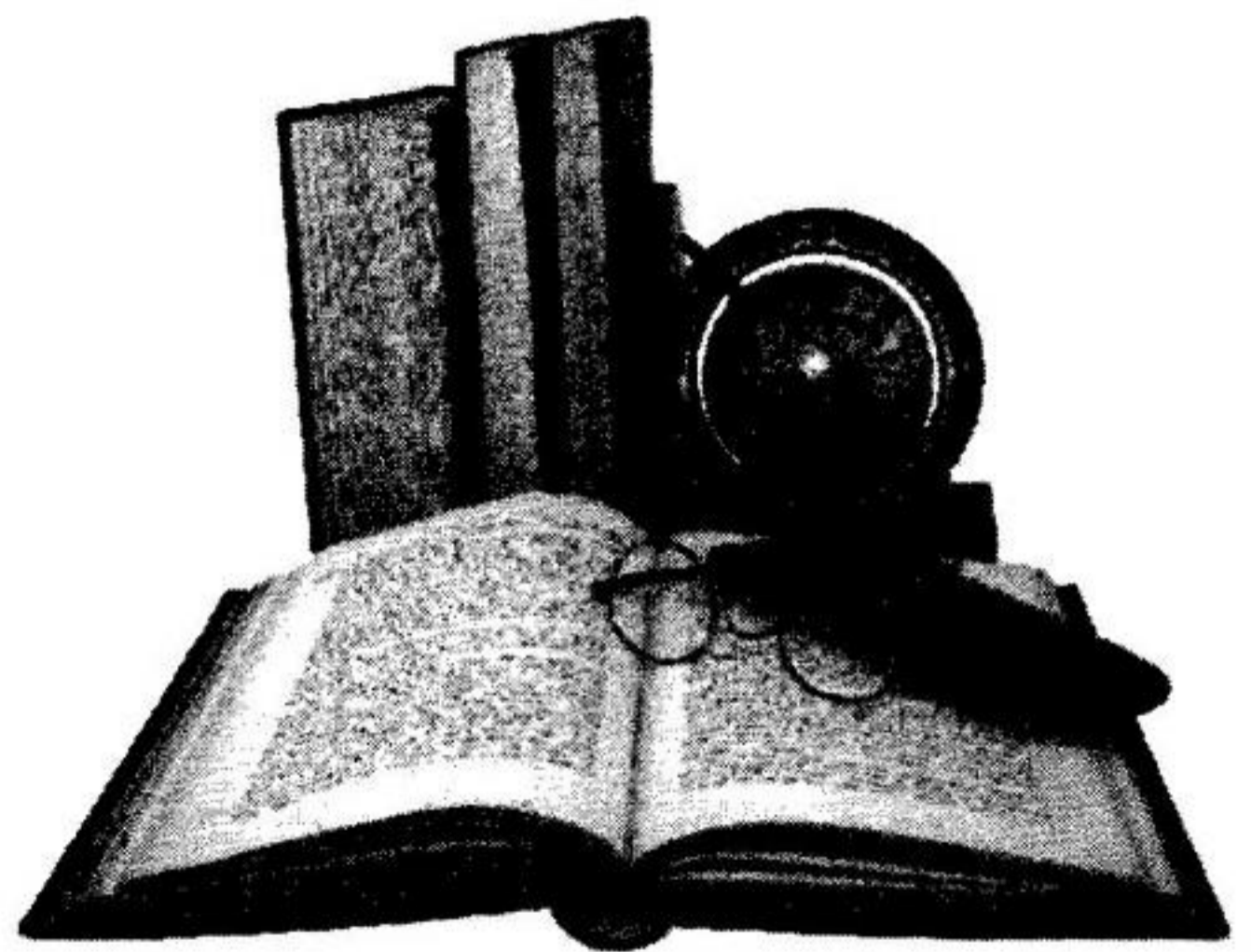
- (i) a country,
- (ii) mountain.
- (iii) island.
- (iv) ocean,
- (v) city
- (vi) village, and
- (vii) various aspects of nature.

The writer selects and concentrates on an area, rejecting irrelevancy. A descriptive essayist is not a photographer who includes every detail; he is more of a painter who makes any particular detail look significant. If the phenomenon of nature is being described, the best plan would be to draw an outline of general description; from general proceed on to the particular aspects;

include some memorable quotations; portray the effect of nature on human feelings and conclude with general reflections.

(ii) Narrative Essays:

When legends and historical incidents, stories, real or imaginary and biographies are to be written, the essay takes a narrative form. The writer may narrate the events as if he was himself either a participant or a spectator. The best method is to take a direct plunge into the ocean of the subject-matter. There need not be a strict chronological sequence, but the writer may alter or modify the events in order to present them vividly. Suppose a plan for Historical Events is to be laid, the introduction should specify the date, if known and the place and the causes that constitute the happening. The interest of the reader should, however, be roused. The introduction ought to project itself into the body which contains the background of the events. The climax or result should be narrated in such a way that the interest is maintained till the end. Then the reflection or the conclusion should follow at the end of the essay. The writer should not express an opinion which is likely to falsify the historical truth.



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(iii) Reflective Essay:

Topics of abstract nature, like:

- (i) qualities.
- (ii) frailties.
- (iii) habits,
- (iv) social, political, economic and personal affairs, etc. when reflected upon, are expressed in a reflective essay. In such a form of writings, the writer has to stamp his personality completely as the essay is a logical collection of his opinions. The writer must be careful to vitalize his arguments and illustrations in such a way that the reader might not get lost in the abyss of abstractions. Suppose the subject of the essay is "Misery", the apt scheme would be to introduce the subject either ordinarily or with a quotation. Express the opinions of various writers who have commented on the futility of life.

Schopenhauer, Hardy, etc. Add your own reflections and mention how far you agree with the opinions of the pessimists or the tragical writers. Conclude the essay logically.

(iv) Argumentative or Expository Essays:

In such type of writing, quotation from some author is given and the writer weaves the essay around the central core of the adage. The writer should substantiate his arguments by suitable references, parallel quotations, examples and illustrations, etc. No definite rules can be set; but the general plan which will fit in an essay, should include:

- (i) The appreciation or depreciation of the author,
- (ii) Explanation of the proverb,
- (iii) Central idea and establishment of its truth.
- (iv) Illustrations from literature.
- (v) Views of other authors.

Conclusion, which will be in the form of a suggestion, is to follow the truth of the quotation.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD ESSAY:

Essay being the reflection of writer's whims, caprices, idiosyncrasies and rationality, it is difficult to bind it in a few stereotyped qualities. As the subject-matter includes "Anything from the Day of Judgment to a pair of scissors", as Lynd puts it, the qualities are likely to be different from essay to essay. All the essays, however, possess some common qualities.

Structure:

Essay is an organic whole but not illshaped lump. It is divided into paragraphs of different lengths.

Unity:

Essay is like a building which is no doubt, made of individual bricks but each brick is not called "a building". It is the unity of design, which goes to make the building. Similarly every sentence, each paragraph and essay as a whole should have unity. The systematic development of thought is the key-note of a good essay. Digression and unnecessary padding will defeat the very purpose of an essay.

Coherence:

The ideas in the essay should not hang loose but should be joined together in a logical sequence. Disjointed ideas will mar the beauty of the essay. The hotch-potch of ill-digested ideas creates anarchy in the essay.

Balance:

A proper proportion should be maintained between the various parts of the essay. If the trivial points are unduly stretched and important points unduly economized, the essay will have ill-balance which is a disqualification. The main theme should always be kept in mind. Suppose the essay has to be written in about 1,000 words, the best division of paragraphs and points would be to put approximately:

- (i) 100 words in the introduction.
- (ii) 100 words in different paragraphs numbering 8, and
- (iii) About 100 words in the conclusion.

Steps to write a Good Essay:

Choice of Subject:

Choose the topic with which you are thoroughly acquainted. Some students select unfamiliar subject, thinking that the attempt may bring them more marks but it is simply wishful thinking. A man who is the master of the topic with which you have got only nodding acquaintance, will secure definitely higher marks than you. Understand the subject thoroughly before you start writing. Wrong start will mean wrong essay.

Making an Outline of your Essay:

Make an outline of the essay. A haphazard approach would mean confusion, repetition and various other flaws in the essay. An outline is like the blue-print of a building. If the essay is not planned well, the execution will also be defective.

The Introduction:

Every essay needs an introduction. Introduction is the face of the essay. It should, therefore, be striking fascinating and must at once arrest the attention of the reader. Various essayists have started their essays in different ways. The modern tendency is to take a direct plunge into the subject matter. The hackneyed method was to start the essay with a definition or a quotation. The start may also depend on the particular subject-matter. Even a quotation may be most fit if the subject of the essay can conveniently accommodate it.

The Body:

It is the most important portion of the essay. Here only one is likely to be led astray. The middle of the essay contains the main discussion on the subject-matter and as such attempts should be made to avoid non-essential material.

The body of the essay should present all the concerned ideas in a sequence. It seems better that paragraph should be devoted exclusively for an idea. The topic sentence of the paragraph should be explained by its supporting details.

The Conclusion:

Conclusion flows naturally out of the essay. No hard and fast rules can be prescribed. The end should neither be dramatic nor abrupt but natural. It is the last impression on the reader or the examiner. Be very careful that last impression is not bad. No indication like:

- (i) It is the time, the essay should end;
- (ii) In conclusion. I may add;
- (iii) O God. solve the problems;
- (iv) Lack of time did not allow me to write more, etc.

Should be given. If introduction is the face, middle the body, conclusion constitutes the legs of the essay. If a beautiful face and

symmetrical body arc supported on lean legs, the whole structure will lose its charm.

Essay is an organic whole, hence the beginning, the middle and the end are to be knitted together.

Style: Dean Alford says in this connection:

"Be simple, be unaffected, be honest in your speaking and writing. Never use a long word where a short one will do. Call a spade a spade and not a well known oblong instrument of manual husbandry: let home be home, and not a residence; a place a place and not a locality and so on. Simplicity is the soul of good English."

Thomas Wilson is of the opinion:

"Among all other lessons this should first be learned that we never affected any strange ink-horn terms, but to speak as is commonly received, neither seeking to be over fine, nor yet living over careless, using our speech as most men do, and ordering our wits as the fewest have done."

Hence avoid:

An essay writer should avoid:

1. **Inexact Phraseology** (illogical or incongruous expressions as):

Example:

- (i) He heard a shriek.
- (ii) It was an old woman being strangled by the burglars.

A shriek cannot be an old woman.

The sentence should be written as:

"He heard a shriek. It was made by an old woman being strangled by the burglars."

2. **Tautology** (different words expressing the same idea).

Example:

When Liaquat Ali Khan was murdered, there was universal mourning by everyone.

(Use either "universal" or "everyone")

3. **Redundancy** (The use of more words than are required).

Example:

(i) Unless and until you speak out. I shall not leave you.

(Use either "unless" or "until").

(ii) Let us mutually help each other.

(Omit either "mutually" or "each other").

4. **Repetition**-Repetition has got a very monotonous effect on the reader. Repetition when badly used, instead of musical effect, produces grating noise.

Example:

"I was of the opinion that women must assert

their rights. I am of the opinion that they must do it even now. I shall be of the opinion that the women must do it in future also."

The best attempt would be:

"I was of the opinion that women must assert their rights. I still say so and will say in future also."

5. **Verbosity**-(Use of many words where a few should suffice).

Example:

"The two friends took a pledge that they would stand by each other in adversity and help each other in all odds of life."

Better written in the following way:

"The two friends pledged to help each other in adversity."

6. **Periphrasis**-(A round about statement).

Example:

"She came out of the sacred edifice and when asked whether the beadsman was inside gave the answer in the negative."

Rewrite:

"She came out of the church and when asked whether the beadsman was inside, replied that he was not."

7. **Pedantry**-(Saying simple things in a learned language).

Example:

"Under unfavourable climatic conditions, the aeroplane could not take off."

8. **Foreign Words**-When equivalent English word is available, do not use the foreign words.

Example:

"Sottovoce I had a tete-a-tete with a literature."

Prefer:

"In a low voice. I had intimate conversation with a literary man."

9. **Technical Terms**-(terms used in particular professions-law, medicine, science, etc.).

Example:

The land he *mortgaged* was lying camouflaged and none could see the *alkaline* covering.

(Avoid frequent use of such words as given in italics).

10. **Vulgarism**-(A phrase or word in common use but not used by the genteel).

Example:

"That gent's kid is in bad biz."

Better use:

"That gentle man's child is in bad business."

11. **Colloquialism**-(used in conversation but not

in writing).

Example:

"He failed in Math, in Matric Exam."

Write:

"He failed in Mathematics in the Matriculation Examination."

12. **Slang**-should be avoided in writing. It is not at all approved by the good stylists.

Example:

"If you mug up the material, you may get through the examination."

Write:

"If you get the material by heart, you may get through the examination."

13. **Hackneyed** Expression (worn-out, old expressions).

Avoid the use of:

- (i) To kill two birds with one stone.
- (ii) To burn the midnight oil.
- (iii) Rome was not built in a day, etc.

14. **Abbreviations**-Essay is the test of your spelling. Do not use abbreviations.

Example:

The Govt, of Pakistan has provided loud-speakers at the Rly. Stations.

(Write "Government:, : "Railway Stations" as full words).

15. **Bad Spelling and Punctuation** Nobody tolerates a spelling mistake.

- (i) Use only those words about which you are sure. If doubt arises, substitute a different word.
- (ii) If an event, which has taken place in the past, is narrated, use past tense.
- (iii) Avoid frequent use of I, we, you, he, etc..
- (iv) Do not criticize the subject for it's being difficult or otherwise.
- (v) While writing an essay, the writer is like a river in spate.

How to make an Outline of Essay?

1. Generate your ideas using the technique of brainstorming.
2. display your ideas on mind-map or web to know the order or overall effect of the ideas.
3. Use multiple techniques, tactics phases, etc. To recall the concerned ideas of the essay, such as merits/demerits, causes/effects. Advantages/disadvantages, functions/contributions, etc.
4. Write outline in an order, similarly to the order of the essay. For Example.
 - (1) Introduction of "Gender Equality".
 - (2) Situation in Pakistan
 - (3) Advantages of Equality
 - (a) Women's empowerment
 - (b) Greater sense of social disparity
 - (c) Better image of the nation.
 - (d) Integrated society
 - (e) Decline of Crimes against women
 - (4) Implications of Gender Equality:
 - (a) Threat to patriarchal head of family
 - (b) Tensions within a family
 - (c) Threat to exclusively male jobs
 - (d) Increase in masculine anxiety
 - (e) Gender divide
 - (5) Causes of Gender inequality
 - (a) Male chauvinism
 - (b) Patrar chal society
 - (c) Religious authority and masculine interpretation
 - (d) Social Customs
 - (e) Stereo typical conversation.
 - (f) Discriminatory laws
 - (g) Less education and poor training of women