

Writing Handout 11 - Essays Background Information

Question: Why are essays so important?

Essays are natural and convincing ways to argue. Magazine articles, letters to the editor, television documentaries, even television commercials and advertisements often use a simple essay structure. If you learn how to write a better essay, you will also become a better reader of essays. It can help you become more thoughtful and critical.

Question: What is an argumentative essay?

When you argue with someone, you are able to make your points one after another, hear the other person's views and then give more ideas and examples until you both agree. An argumentative essay details one side of an argument on paper. You present a problem and think of solutions and examples. You organize these ideas into a clear structure so others can follow your thoughts. Most of the essays you will write at university will be argumentative because you have to support an idea or an opinion you have with facts.

Question: Are there different kinds of academic essays for different situations?

Yes, there are many different kinds. The main difference is whether you use your own ideas exclusively, or whether you draw on the work of others. In an examination, you probably don't have reference books with you, so you write an essay with examples from common knowledge or experience. In a research essay, you look through journals and books for ideas to support your arguments or collect new information through questionnaires and observation. Other differences have to do with the type of arguments you make.

Question: What is the structure of an essay?

Essays usually include (1) an introduction that states the problem, followed by (2) a body of examples and explanations, and finally (3) a conclusion that summarizes your point of view and suggests some kind of action, general observation, or prediction.

The Argumentative Essay

The following is an example of a simple 5-paragraph argumentative essay.

Unified for Uniforms

Many schools in Japan require students to wear a school uniform. All of the students at a school wear the same clothes as everyone else. Although some people do not like the idea of wearing the same clothes as everyone else every day, there are several advantages to the school uniform.

First, having a school uniform is a great time-saver. Students do not have to worry about what to wear each day. There is no need to spend time planning how to coordinate accessories or match clothing colors. The decision of what to wear has already been made for them.

Second, school uniforms are wonderful space-savers. In typical Japanese homes where storage space is valuable, it is good to reduce the amount of clothes each family member has. Having a few school uniforms instead of multiple weekday outfits keeps our closets from being full with clothing.

Finally, the school uniforms of today are inexpensive to clean. People no longer have to spend a lot of money to professionally dry-clean uniforms. Just place the uniforms into your home washing machine, and they get perfectly clean.

In conclusion, school uniforms help people to save time, save space, and save money. Because of these reasons, school uniforms are a good idea. All schools should consider adopting a policy that requires students to wear school uniforms.