

## **IMPORTANCE OF WRITING GOOD COMPOSITION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Writing a good composition is just like creating a piece of good art. Just as any budding artist goes about perfecting his art, following some basic ground rules. Similarly a budding writer goes about refining his art, by writing different types of composition. This art is not difficult to perfect and once the methodology is understood, one derives a great sense of satisfaction, which stands one in good stead through life. In the case of student specially those preparing for ICSE English language paper one, writing a composition of 350 to 400 words in essay, and a letter is the most important part of the paper. The objective of this question is, to test the ability of the examinee, in writing well – organized clear and accurate English.*

**Key words:** *Arouse, Anecdote, Dwelling, Weave, Jarring, Judiciously, Monotonous, Drab, Lively, Inculcate, Absurd, Awkward, Fragment, Emphasis, Redundant, Ambiguity, Connotation, Digression, Adhering, Omission, Enliven, Stumbling, Ailment etct.c.*

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## **The Art of effective English writing**

English is a typical language. It is not uncommon to find, that people who are good at spoken English, not able to express themselves in writing. The reason is that, they do not visualize and write to a plan. For a composition to be meaningful, it is not necessary that it should be written in superfluous language, with big difficult words. What is required is that the same should be written to a plan, with a line of continuity and should express the feelings of the writer in plain simple English.

Therefore, for a composition (essay or letter) to be meaningful we must observe the following basic rule:

- Write a plan.
- Ensure a line of continuity throughout the composition.
- Avoid use of high-flown language.
- A good introduction and conclusion are an essential pre-requisite.

## **Besides the above some other valuable guidelines are**

### ***The presentation of material should be orderly and coherent***

This specifically means that you have to take some time in thinking what you are going to write about. You must therefore read the topic carefully, and determine what is about (Please do not hazard a guess). As we all know a good composition must have a good beginning (introduction), a body and a conclusion. The introduction should arouse interest and attract attention, while the conclusion should satisfy it. There are a number of ways by which you can make your composition instantly appealing.

#### ***a. Suggested ways to begin or conclude a composition***

- Begin or end with a quotation which is appropriate to the subject.
- Pose a question.
- Make a factual statement that is supported by statistical facts and figures.
- Define a problem.
- Describe the scene (in case of a descriptive composition).
- Make a strong statement.
- State an anecdote that is related to the subject.

Having decided on how you are to begin and conclude your composition you must plan the rest of your composition as below.

#### ***b. Write to a plan***

Arrange your ideas in a proper, orderly sequence, with each paragraph dwelling on a central idea, which can be located in sentence or two. The rest of the paragraph is but an expansion of this central idea. Weave your sentences so that they flow smoothly, and are linked to one another without any jarring effect. This can be done by judiciously using appropriate linking words. Similarly, the paragraphs should also be linked to one another, with each idea meshing into the other, to make the composition interesting (for more on this see what to write and how to generate ideas).

#### ***c. Add variety to your sentences***

Short monotonous sentences make the composition drab and boring. It is therefore important, to vary the pattern of sentences, to make them expressive and lively. This can be done in a variety of ways. Thus for example the following idea can be expressed in many different ways

- He went to sleep after returning home from office.
- On returning home from office, he went to sleep.
- Having returned from office he went to sleep etc.

The professional should inculcate the ability to write effective sentences. Below are listed some requisites which a technocrat should pay attention to while writing a sentence:

### ***I. Avoid odd sentence structure***

Serious efforts should be made in the construction of sentences. Absurd or awkward sentence structure should be avoided. A few examples have been listed below:

A man is standing in black suit. (Incorrect)

A man in black suit is standing. (Correct)

Two research bodies reached the same conclusion, which worked independently. (Incorrect)

Two independent research bodies reached the same conclusion. (Correct)

### ***II. Choice of appropriate words***

Words should be selected in accordance with the theme in question. For example:

A dog barks. (Not mews or roars)

Cats live in houses. (Not in holes or dens)

### ***III. Avoid sentence fragments***

Sentence fragments should be avoided since fragments often lead to confusion.

### ***IV. Emphasis on short sentences***

For better readability and to avoid misunderstanding, short sentences should be constructed. The habit of overloading the sentences with too much content leads to the loss of meaning. On an average, there can be 16 to 18 words per sentence. But this does not mean that long sentences cannot be written. In the words of **Lesikar** and **Flatley**, “our emphasis on short sentences does not mean that you should use all short sentences. In fact, you should avoid overusing them. The overuse of short sentences results in a choppy effect and suggests primer simplicity.” Hence they suggest, “You should use moderately long sentences occasionally. They are sometimes useful in subordinating information and in increasing interest by adding variety.”

## ***V. Economizing on words***

According to **Lesikar** and **Flatley** a second basic technique of shortening sentences is to use words economically. Economizing of words actually means eliminate words i. e. not including in the use of surplus words. It includes:

- Avoid roundabout ways of saying things.
- Not to use cluttering phrases.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition of words or ideas.
- Avoid redundant phrases.
- Long winding sentences should be avoided.

## ***VI. Avoid ambiguous sentences***

Ambiguity is a major hindrance to clarity as it is often mars the meaning of a sentence. Sometimes, the modifiers in sentences are misplaced or inappropriate words are used. To avoid ambiguity, it becomes essential that modifiers should be placed in the correct position so that it would be easier to understand the sentences clearly. All sentences should clearly state the writer's thought and they should be properly punctuated and have correct word order.

## ***VII. Consistency***

All sentences should follow some pattern. That is he has to choose one type of style- formal or informal. Likewise he has to use words for correct connotations and maintains grammatical consistency. For example:

The more you work, the more satisfaction you get.

Seeing is believing.

### ***d. Smooth flow of sentences by the use of effective transitional words and phrases( Linkers)***

Transitional words and phrases are used to connect the sentences, so that they flow smoothly from one to next, and are coherent. Such words also called linkers. They link the sense of one sentence, or paragraph to another. Some of the most common transitional words are, consequently, however, afterwards, notwithstanding, nevertheless etc.

### ***e. Optimum length of the composition***

Try to limit your composition to 350 to 400 words which would be about three hand written pages. A composition of optimum size would be one, which does justice to the topic by dwelling on each relevant point. This is so far a short composition, would limit the expression and evolution of ideas, while a long composition may lead to digression from the point, and also increase the likelihood of committing careless mistakes. Care should be taken in adhering to the above optimum limits. Avoid wasting precious time in counting the number of words.

## **General accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar**

It is but natural, that you will make careless mistakes, as you are writing under pressure. You must therefore correct the same, by editing your composition, for which you must spare five minutes of your time. Some of the most common mistakes, which students generally make, are:

- Errors of tense
- Wrong sentence construction
- Misuse of words
- Wrong spelling
- Omission or wrong use of prepositions
- Punctuation errors
- Wrong use of idioms
- Wrong use of pronouns
- Errors of agreement and number

## **Use of appropriate style**

There are broadly six types of essay composition. Each has its own distinct style and flavor. They can sometimes even be combined to give a natural feel and flavor to your writing. Thus a narrative composition can be made richer, by adding an element of description. Similarly adding an element of narration can enliven a descriptive passage.

## **Some Do`s and Don`ts on writing a good composition**

### ***Do`s***

- Write on a topic with which you are familiar.

- Write on a topic on which you have enough matter and which interests you.
- Write on a topic on which you can show originality.
- Write to the point on the subject, don't waiver from the theme.
- Do quote from the literary works of great authors, to make your introduction and conclusion interesting.
- Remember an introduction should arouse interest and conclusion should satisfy it.
- Use plain and simple English, with good punctuation and grammar.
- A good vocabulary is an asset worth having, which helps in conveying the precise thought.
- Be logical in expressing your view, without being unduly offensive.
- Revise your essay after writing the last sentence.

### ***Don'ts***

- Write on a topic on which you do not have complete knowledge of facts.
- Write memorized material, especially when it may appear to be out of context.
- Use words which are ambiguous, or the meaning of which is not known to you.
- Use long confusing sentences.
- Be repetitive in the use of words or phrases.

### **What to write and how to go about it?**

Having chosen a topic base on the guidelines given above, one should first of all list out all ideas, which come to mind pertaining to the subject. After having made out an exhaustive list, one should go about arranging them in a proper sequence, making out points and sub points, ensuring that there is continuity of thought. The next step is to express each point effectively. This ensures that you write a plan, without being repetitive. Such a composition is instantly appealing to the examiner, as he is quickly able to access the examinees capability. This is specially so in a composition, in which one is required to give one's view for, or against a particular statement.

### ***Suggested guidelines***

- Choose a topic.
- List out all ideas that come to mind.

- Organize them in a proper sequence making out points and sub points.
- Express each point effectively.
- Conclude.
- Revise.

## **How to generate ideas?**

To generate good ideas, is the crux the problem and many a student of English language, find this a major stumbling block. The more original the ideas, the more different would be your composition, from the general run of the mill stuff. However for this, one has to have a habit of extensive reading of books and newspapers. The readers are encouraged to inculcate this habit.

There are, however, some basic guidelines, which can be followed for generation of ideas. Just as one cannot take the same medicines for different ailment, similarly for different type of topics, different approach is required.

Given below are the different types of essays and the suggested guidelines to generate idea for each. Students shall find them helpful initially and in course of time; they shall be able to improve upon them on their own.

### ***Type of essay***

### ***Type of approach***

Narrative essays

By replying to questions as Where, When, Why, How, Who and What approach?

Descriptive essays

By responding to senses of taste, touch and hearing

Argumentative essays

Arguments based on Historical, Personal, Social, Economic, Religious and Psychological factors

Topical or reflective essays

Logic based on Historical, Personal, Social, Economic, Religious and Psychological factors.

## **How to organize ideas?**

Having listed down all the ideas that come to mind, based on the above approach. The next step is to organize them into a proper sequence. In this process some ideas may have to be

discarded, as they do not fit into the sequence. In order to help you organize them, you could use any of the following sequence, depending on the subject of the composition.

Time related	Giving a sequence of events in a chronological order.
People related	Giving an account of different types of people and their activity.
Logical related	Stating of ideas in their logical sequence.

Having understood how to generate ideas and organize them, it would now be appropriate to differentiate the different types of essays. This identification would help you to judge, whether you know enough of the subject before attempting it. You can also present the same more effectively, by using the method suitable for such a type of essay.

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