\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Some Tips for Good Writing\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The following tips are partially my own and partly taken from:

Graff G, Birkenstein C They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 2017

The writing templates provided are all from this work. Some may say that writing in templates stifles your creativity, but you have consistently shown that you cannot master the basics of writing well, and these are some excellent training wheels for you to write correctly.

Writing an EE Fundamentals

Stylistically too many students at this school attempt to over intellectualise their writing in an effort to sound more intelligent. An affected style has the dual effect of turning off the reader by making it needlessly difficult to understand and preventing you from developing your writing style. It is vitally important that you write because you enjoy it and it is a skill that you would like to improve, rather than trying to impress someone. You wouldn’t have any respect for someone who had a conversation with you and wanted to confuse you, so why try and write like that? There is a fundamental skill in being able to make complex ideas accessible. You need to consider your audience – you are writing this EE for a teacher who will probably have a bachelor’s degree and may or may not be an expert in what you are writing on.

Too often, however, academic writing is taught as a process of saying “true” or “smart” things in a vacuum, as if it were possible to argue effectively without being in conversation with someone else. If you have been taught to write a traditional five-paragraph essay, for example, in IGCSE, you have learned how to develop a thesis and support it with evidence. Answering a question in this way is good advice as far as it goes, but it leaves out the critical fact that we don’t make arguments without being provoked in the real world. It is not what the EE requires, and you need to get this out of your system.

Significance

Often the biggest problem with an EE is the writer does not answer the essential question of ‘who cares’? Demonstrating an awareness of the broader implications of your topic involves you addressing the significance of the question at the beginning of the paper. Ideally, you will talk about the preexisting beliefs and their broader implications.

Often, I am left thinking ‘so what’ at the end of the essay. There is no point in writing 4000 words - without something valuable for the reader to take away from it. You may be entering into a hotly debated subject, or you may have found an area that you feel is under-explored or been under-examined for some time. At any rate, you need to explain why what you are attempting to do is meritorious.

Methodology

You have to explain your methodology for all subjects and, most importantly, the purpose of using your chosen approach. Sloppy evidence and data come from a lack of intent or logic to the methodology, leading to flawed analysis. You need to dispel any doubts about the veracity of your findings straight away by showing that you know how to approach your subject correctly. When evaluating the usefulness of your sources, it could be appropriate to question their methodology. You cannot treat all your sources as though they are equally valid or equally useful to what you are trying to do. Even if you have found something of use in each source, you need to analyse to what extent.

Some Templates

Smith and colleagues evaluated\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to determine

whether \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Because X does not account for\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I instead used \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Evidence

It is important not to misrepresent what an academic is saying and present their argument fairly and impartially, even if you disagree. Other’s arguments must be able to be assessed independently of your view. The better you present others’ arguments, paradoxically, you will look better when you evaluate their validity.

Get in the habit of presenting key ideas as quickly as possible so the reader is not left wondering why you use the examples you do. If you want to use your idea in tandem with a summary of another’s view, this is fine. When you summarise another’s argument, you need to make it holistic (what essentially are they saying), not a list of all their different points. Some arguments do not require deep analysis, and often good writing pushes through several arguments very quickly. Some views will require a deeper analysis. It is really up to your logic and intuition to distinguish how much time to spend explaining others’ arguments.

Quoting is often helpful in presenting an author’s point of view accurately. You need to be sure that you only quote significant ideas. You do not want to be so reliant on quotes that your ideas get lost. Quoting means nothing unless you discuss the validity of what the author is saying and explain why the author is worth repeating. There is no point quoting just to prove that you read the work. Some quotes will require further explanation, and some will not. Analysis should be made on the quote but be careful not to over analyse. Don’t introduce your quotes without a good reason, e.g. A quote by John Coxon says:.’

Be careful when attributing viewpoints. Avoid making bland statements, e.g. ‘Mr. Spence says that YK Pao students use their time poorly.’ Instead, you would say: ‘Mr. Spence admonishes/criticises/chastises YK Pao students for their time management.’ Other terms to avoid are ‘talk about’ or ‘discusses’.

There is often a hesitancy from students to be critical of a source. Often, they think that they have to be an expert in the field before they can offer their evaluation. While it is advisable to know your limitations, this does not prevent you from using logic to explain what you feel is the more valid claim. Remember, you do not always have to be critical (and many students think this is all critical thinking is); you can agree with the sources you used. If two sources are making different points, you will have to use critical analysis to decide what one provides the more valid claim (this is why it is so important not to misrepresent what the sources are saying).

Often you may find that you agree with the author’s evidence but feel that they have misinterpreted it. You should avoid disagreeing with the entirety of an author’s work; it is unlikely that they could be so confused while you are not. Also, don’t disagree with every source you read. If you agree with an author’s view, then elaborate on it. Don’t simply be an echo chamber and repeat what they just said.

Science is no different from any other type of writing. You are not meant to be presenting a series of uncontested facts. While you need to have a firm basis in the data, you need to bring insight and creativity to the way it is presented. Data should be explained, do not let tables do the explaining for you. You need to make sense of the data for the reader, do not leave them to come up with their own conclusions. Science is incremental; you do not have to agree or disagree wholly. You can take another’s findings and add your ideas to them.

These are some templates to show you are analysing the validity of viewpoints as you provide evidence.

Author X contradicts herself. At the same time that she argues \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, she also implies\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

I agree that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, that is not to say \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In their recent work X has offered harsh criticism for Y for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

By focusing on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, X overlooks the deeper problem

of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Although X does not say so directly, she apparently assumes

that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

She argues, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and I agree because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Her argument that is supported by new research showing that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

X is right that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but she seems on more dubious ground

When she claims that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

X is surely right about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because, as she may not be

aware, recent studies have shown that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

X’s theory of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is extremely useful because it sheds

light on the difficult problem of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

“X tells a story about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to make the point that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. My own experience with yields a point that is similar/different/both similar and different. What I take away from my own experience with is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. As a result, I conclude \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Analysis

You have to find the right balance between summarising others’ views and offering your own. Your evaluation must be based on the evidence you have assembled, but the research’s extent is weighted far less than your analysis. If you are analysing literature or art, it is vital to represent others’ views on the text first or at least offer a potential alternative interpretation before weighing in with your views. Creative works will not have a clear thesis statement and, therefore, will be open to interpretation; you cannot treat your viewpoint as the only valid idea. If you are struggling to find the key concepts in a work of literature, then look for the central conflict and see what side the author seems to favour, then see if there is any way that the author could support the other side.

It is acceptable if you are unable to come to a clear decision. But you have to be sophisticated in your reasoning on why making an absolute conclusion is impossible

It is crucial to distinguish what is evidence and what is your analysis of the evidence. Even though you may have been told not to use personal pronouns, it is better to use them to give this clear delineation than be unclear about what is your personal analysis.

Have a look at these three sentences and see if you can understand what one is the best:

‘Chartwells describes itself as providing healthy nutritious meals; I would take issue with this for a number of reasons.’

‘I have major issues with what Chartwells would define as healthy nutritious meals’

‘There are troubling issues with what Chartwells defines as a healthy nutritious meal.’

Hopefully, you can see that the third sentence establishes the point of view in the quickest time; it pushes forward the proposition and your disagreement with it using few words, which then allows you to give your examples as to why.

You must think about what criticisms people may have of your work. Being able to identify personal weaknesses is a fundamental academic process. If you recognise the possible arguments that people may make of your findings, you can then disprove these objections within the work.

e.g.

Yet some readers may challenge my view by insisting that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

.

Of course, many will probably disagree on the grounds that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Suppose you can put these to a particular perspective, e.g. Marxists, Neoliberals, feminist, etc. In that case, this is even more effective as long as you are not too stereotypical and treat their ideas with respect – this also makes you appear fair.

Some analytical templates

Although X may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today’s

concern over \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Ultimately, what is at stake here is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

These findings have important implications for the broader

domain of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

If we are right about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, then major consequences follow

for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

These conclusions/This discovery will have significant applications

in as well as in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Of course (Author) might object that\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Although I concede that\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , I still maintain that\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

In conclusion, then, as I suggested earlier, defenders of

can’t have it both ways. Their assertion that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

is contradicted by their claim that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

In recent discussions of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a controversial issue has been whether \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. On the one hand, some argue that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. On the other hand, however, others argue that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In the words of, one of this view’s main proponents, “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”. In sum, then, the issue is whether \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. My own view is that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Though I concede that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I still maintain that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. For example, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Although some might object that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I would

reply that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The issue is important because. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

If group X is right that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, as I think they are, then we

need to reassess the popular assumption that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Although I disagree with much that X says, I fully endorse his

final conclusion that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Some Writing Ideas

Key terms are essential, but try to use them in a slightly different way to avoid sounding monotonous. When constructing a paragraph, try and link back to show that you are building on the previous sentence to create momentum, e.g. saying furthermore, nevertheless or another example. The trick, therefore, is not to avoid repeating yourself but to recycle essential ideas in varied and interesting enough ways that you advance your argument without sounding tedious.

The key to good writing that flows well is getting transitions within and between your sentences. Here are some useful ones to use.

**Addition**

also indeed and

in fact besides moreover

furthermore so too in addition

**Elaboration**

Actually to put it another way by extension

to put it bluntly in other words to put it succinctly

in short ultimately that is

**Example**

after all for instance as an illustration

specifically consider to take a case in point

for example

**Cause and Effect**

accordingly so as a result

then consequently therefore

hence thus since

**Comparison**

along the same lines likewise in the same way

similarly

**Contrast**

although nevertheless but

nonetheless by contrast on the contrary

conversely on the other hand despite

regardless even though whereas

however while yet in contrast

**Concession**

admittedly naturally although it is true

of course granted to be sure

**Conclusion**

as a result in sum consequently

therefore hence thus

in conclusion to sum up in short

to summarize

If you are going to use words like this, that, their, his and her, make sure that you clearly define the subject that they are referring.

When trying to present evidence, these are good verbs to liven up your writing and more accurately explain what another author is trying to do.

**Verbs for making a claim**

argue insist assert

observe believe remind us

claim report emphasize

suggest

**Verbs for expressing agreement**

acknowledge endorse admire

extol agree praise

**Verbs for expressing agreement**

celebrate the fact that reaffirm corroborate

support do not deny verify

**Verbs for questioning or disagreeing**

complain qualify complicate

question contend refute

contradict reject deny

renounce deplore the tendency to repudiate

**Verbs for making recommendations**

advocate implore call for

plead demand recommend

encourage urge exhort

warn

I do not want the verb **prove** written anywhere in your essay.