

Some notes on essay writing

The Writing and Study Skills Program exists to help students improve a wide range of academic skills - from note taking and time management to reading, essay writing and exam preparation. Academic assistance is provided to students in two ways: first, two tutors are available 30 hours per week for individual (and confidential) consultation during both Fall and Winter terms. This year to date, the number of students already seen exceeds 200. Secondly, workshops are held throughout the academic year on topics related to reading, writing and study skills. This year to date, the number of students who have attended these workshops exceeds 600. If you would benefit from the services of the Writing and Study Skills Program (which are offered free of charge to all students); please call the Department of Extension and Summer Session at 453-4646 to set up an appointment. We are located at the top of campus on Duffie Drive (on the ground floor of the Department of Extension and Summer Session). The article below is just a sampling of the kind of information we can provide you with. Good luck on those final essays!

Writing an essay is like building a house: the success of the final product depends on both the soundness of the design and the skill of the artisan. And contrary to what you might think, a good plan and reasonable skills (you don't have to write as well as Hemingway to pass) will usually result in a good essay.

Your first (and most important) consideration should always be the outline, which is essentially the map that you design to take you from point A (your hypothesis) to point B (your conclusion). Just as it would be ludicrous to venture across unknown territory without an accurate map, so is it equally ludicrous to investigate and delineate a hypothesis without an accurate outline. Invest time and considerable thought into the construction of your outline. Robert Graves claimed that he wrote *The White Goddess* in six weeks (qualifying that it took him five years to develop his outline). While I don't recommend that you take five years to draft your own outline, I do suggest that you give considerable thought to outlining before ever putting pen to paper. The result (and it happens every time) will be a more lucid essay, a deeper investigation of your topic, and a more rigorous logic throughout.

Thirty percent of your essay is finished when your outline is complete. From there a few simple rules should carry you through. First, never call attention to yourself as author or your essay as artifice. In other words, do not use the first person pronouns "I" or "we" (which

call unnecessary attention to you as author) and do not use construction like "This paper will attempt to prove that..." (which calls unnecessary attention to your paper [artifice] and which relegates you immediately to a passive voice). The tone of an essay, rather, should be asser-

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ive, argumentative, and self effacing, attempting always to state things simply and directly. Alexander Pope cautioned that poor writing was "effusive" and that we all must "learn to write more shortly". Pope's words were an invitation to say more by writing less, clearly the greatest challenge for any writer. When writing essays at the undergraduate level, clarity is a virtue. Use

one word instead of two!

Finally, when writing your essay, envision yourself as a lawyer defending a client. If your client is your hypothesis then obviously you do everything in your power to defend that hypothesis (including citing suitable quotes, introducing favorable supplementary evidence, and consistently calling attention to the strengths of your position/hypothesis). Remember too that a lawyer's defence (and your paper) is only as good as its conclusion. Put extra effort into writing a strong conclusion, a conclusion that not only summarizes your argument/hypothesis, but also addresses a few of the questions your argument raises. This is called inductive reasoning.

Congratulations! Another thirty percent of your essay is finished when your first draft is complete. From here your effort involves proofreading and revision. The simple rule is evaluate yourself. Read your paper as you think your professor might. Give yourself a

grade based on that reading. If you discover something that is wrong or that your professor might react

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negatively to (like misspelling, poor logic, or convoluted syntax) then take steps to correct that error. What you don't feel good about, your professor won't feel good about - develop a sensitivity to that

feeling! When in doubt, consult a dictionary or English language handbook (Harbrace College Handbook is excellent).

Lastly, put your final draft into the appropriate format. Because there are so many different styles and formats (like Form and format, MLA, and APA, just to name a few), it is essential that you determine the appropriate style for your particular application. Consult with your professor: s/he will show you the way.

A final word to the needy: consult with the reference librarians why you are in doubt or have difficulty. They are excellent sources of information (and inspiration) and can save your hours of wasted time among the library stacks. Good luck and have fun!

If you are still having problems (or think you require tutoring) the Writing and Study Skills Program exists to help. If you would benefit from our services (which are offered free of charge), please call the Department of Extension and Summer Session at 453-4646 to set up an appointment.

Survey

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Before programs can be established to educate people on how to prevent or avoid assaults and to implement new policies at the university, Finkleman stressed to council that such a survey must be first done to obtain information to evaluate what type of services will be needed at both UNB and STU.

Not only will the survey determine how often sexual assaults occur on campus, but also when and under what circumstances. Finkleman said this is important because it might pinpoint just what types of circumstances assaults occur in. For example Finkleman said one might see a relation between alcohol abuse and assault cases.

The Student Union voted unanimously to pass the motion to allocate \$1,000 to the needs assessment survey. In addition they also voted to lobby the UNB administration "to take a leadership role in providing the additional funding required to complete" the research.

NOTICE OF ELECTIONS

Nominations are invited for the election of student representatives as follows;

BOARD OF GOVERNORS: (Graduate or Undergraduate Students)

Two seats --terms ending 30 June 1992

FREDERICTON SENATE: (Undergraduate Students)

Four seats --terms ending 30 June 1992

One seat --term ending 30 June 1993

ELECTION DATE: TUESDAY, 26 MARCH 1991

NOMINATIONS CLOSE: Tuesday, 12 March 1991, at 4:30 p.m.

ELIGIBILITY AND PROCEDURES: inquire at offices of Student Union, SUB, or University Secretary, Room 110, Old Arts Building.

James Woodfield
University Secretary



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