

GENERAL ESSAY GUIDELINES/TIPS:

INTRODUCTION: Be clear and concise. The introduction should not be more than ½ page and should include a thesis that fully responds to **ALL** components of the prompt.

Thesis: Your thesis statement included in the first paragraph tells the reader the basic or main idea of your paper (addressing the issue raised by the prompt) and points to themes or arguments coming in the rest of the essay.

SPELLING and GRAMMAR: Check your spelling and grammar. Mistakes in spelling and grammar distract from the flow of your writing. Have a classmate proofread your final draft, or set up weekly meetings with the UCSD Writing Center and go regularly at least 5 times throughout the quarter. Accurate spelling and grammar is good business practice.

APPROPRIATE DETAIL: Use details unique to your own experience that provide evidence for your argument. Examples should be relevant to your thesis, interesting and not too generic.

READING CITATIONS: Plan to have two or more citations in your essay, either for defining technical terms or for citing theory that relates to your own experiences. Avoid long quotations in the essay. Please simply paraphrase the reading (summarize the point in your own words) and then give a parenthetical citation.

Paraphrased example (recommended): Note the included definition of the technical term “in-groups”:

Banaji explains that conflict of interest often favors in-groups, the people with whom we easily associate (Banaji, 5).

Quoted example (not recommended): Note the author gives no original thought that explains the quote:

Banaji says that “in-group favoritism amounts to giving extra credit for group membership” (Banaji, 5).

AUDIENCE: Your audience is not the Professor or the TA, but instead another high-level undergraduate who did the reading a year or two ago and needs a slight refresher. This means you should not use technical terms without first defining them (ideally with a reference to the relevant reading).

ON TOPIC: Follow and answer the prompt clearly; don't wander off into side issues that have no bearing on your argument. In other words, first compose your thesis as a full answer to the prompt, and then make sure you stick to that thesis. It is possible you will want to update your thesis once you've written your body paragraphs, which is a good sign because it means your writing is helping you to understand your argument.

GOOD ARGUMENTS: A good response should be a balance between synthesis that explains the examples used and original and coherent thoughts that address every component of the prompt. Consider as a metaphor the way that a lawyer presents an argument in a trial:

- 1) **Intro (Opening Statements):** Give a quick statement of what it is you'll be proving (thesis discussed above) and, in general, what kind of examples you will use.
- 2) **Body Paragraphs (Evidence and Cross-Examination):** Give your evidence and discuss what your evidence is showing.
 - a. Each body paragraph should have a topic sentence or at least a solid transition from the previous paragraph. The body paragraph is then a blend of clarifying detail, definitions, arguments, and synthesis statements. It is best to end each body paragraph with a summary thought that links back to the thesis given in the introduction.
 - b. Your body paragraphs should, taken as a set, provide thoughtful analysis and demonstration of the questions raised by the prompt. You need both a high level of detail and thoughtful general statements that explicitly cover the prompt.
- 3) **Conclusion (Closing Remarks):** Give a quick re-statement for the reader and leave the audience with something to consider.
 - a. Your conclusion for a three to five-page paper does not need to be exhaustive. If you've given good arguments throughout the body paragraphs, the conclusion will feel redundant and can be quite short. Try to end the conclusion with an original thought that can tie back to the introduction of the essay.
 - b. However, if you find that at the end of your essay your conclusion is providing a *better* response than your intro, then please consider adapting that conclusion back into your intro and using it to restructure your essay.
- 4) **Expect to revise your essay at least once.** If you do a rough draft right before the deadline, you will likely end up with rough content that is too reflective or isn't very well connected together.

An "A" essay will provide a balanced blend of nuanced and clear examples with good supporting arguments and analysis that fully answers the prompt. If you're not sure what the difference is between analysis and clarifying examples, please set up an appointment with your TA.