

15 *teaching ideas for essay writing*

1

A brief lesson in clarity! For a quick, fun starter, remind students how important it is to be clear in their explanations. Get them to write a brief, clear explanation for something simple such as how to tie a shoe lace or a tie. Then see if their partner can follow their explanation.

2

Mat mates. Encourage students to make their own 'criteria mats', for use when writing. The laminated mats provide a check list to achieve a C (or any other level/grade). They could remind students to use PEE paragraphs, to provide evidence for each point they make, and to return regularly to the question.

3

Frankenstein essays. Divide the class into groups and give each group a different essay question. Each member of the group must write one paragraph – the paragraphs are then 'stitched' together and must make a coherent whole!

4

Keep it brief. Many students are daunted by the prospect of a long essay. Initially, insist they keep it short and 'sweet' – quality rather than quantity. Tell students to write a mini essay in no more than 200 words.

5

Cloze modelling. Hand out a model essay with key evidence missing. Students have to select some appropriate information to support the analysis.

6

PEE carousel. Divide the class into groups, giving each group a different essay question or area of the essay. The groups start by writing a clear, articulate and detailed **point** and pass it on. The next group must add some relevant **evidence** to suit the point and pass on. The third group writes an **explanation** of how the evidence links to the point.

7

Academic works. Read some extracts from interesting, academic works. Discuss what makes them effective, and then encourage students to experiment with the same features in their own writing.

8

Role swap. Students will love the chance to step into your shoes if you write a weak paragraph which they then have to mark, grade and re-write. Share some examples as a class as a great example of AfL.

9

Word up. After writing an essay, insist that students use a thesaurus to change at least six words.

10

Flow charts. Help students structure and organise their essays by getting them to create a big flow chart of key points, adding relevant evidence and explanation sentences in different colours.

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11

Expert essays. Collect feature articles or editorials on topical subjects from popular newspapers. Share top band grade criteria with students. They then find evidence from the essays to prove that they are top band (or not!).

12

Exemplars. Use exemplar essays to demonstrate what good essay writing looks like. Use level or grade criteria to show how the work is graded. Can students improve the exemplar to the next level?

13

Post-it planning. To generate and sequence ideas, get students to put key quotes and points on a Post-it note and stick these on the board. They can then easily be moved, discarded or linked to create a sense of order.

14

PEE card sort. Students practise finding appropriate evidence for their points by matching evidence cards with key point and explanation cards.

15

Writing frames. Provide a prompt sheet which helps students to structure an essay. Give topic sentences per paragraph. Add more bullet point guidance for less able students.
