

Academic Essay Cheat Sheet

What is an Academic Essay?

An academic essay is a formal piece of writing that presents a clear argument or analysis on a specific topic. It uses evidence and logical reasoning to support the writer's position.

Types of Academic Essays

Type	Description
Informative	Explains a topic with facts and information
Persuasive	Convinces the reader to agree with your opinion
Argumentative	Presents both sides, then argues for one position
Narrative	Tells a story with a clear message or lesson
Expository	Explains how something works or why something happens
Compare & Contrast	Shows similarities and differences between two or more subjects

5-Paragraph Structure

1. Introduction	Hook → Background Info → Thesis Statement
2. Body ①	Topic Sentence → Evidence → Explanation → Transition
3. Body ②	Topic Sentence → Evidence → Explanation → Transition
4. Body ③	Topic Sentence → Evidence → Explanation → Transition
5. Conclusion	Restate Thesis → Summarize Points → Final Thought

Introduction Hooks

Your first sentence matters! Here are hook types from easiest (★) to most challenging (★★★★).

Level	Hook Type	Example
★	Question	"Have you ever wondered why some students succeed while others struggle?"
★★	Statistic	"According to research, 75% of students feel unprepared for college writing."
★★★	Anecdote	"Last summer, I witnessed something that changed my perspective forever..."
★★★★	Quote	"Education is the most powerful weapon," said Nelson Mandela.

Thesis Statement Formula

Topic + Opinion + 3 Reasons = Strong Thesis

✓ Good Examples:

- ① *"School uniforms should be required because they reduce bullying, save money, and create equality."*
- ② *"Social media negatively affects teenagers by causing anxiety, reducing sleep quality, and decreasing face-to-face communication."*

x Weak Examples:

"Today I will tell you all about school uniforms."
"In this essay, I will explain why homework is important."

Why is this weak?

These phrases are too casual and don't show your argument. A strong thesis makes a clear claim — it doesn't just announce the topic.

Transition Words

Category	Words to Use
Addition	Furthermore, Moreover, In addition, Additionally, Besides
Contrast	However, On the other hand, Nevertheless, In contrast, Although
Cause/Effect	Therefore, As a result, Consequently, Thus, Due to this
Conclusion	Ultimately, In summary, To conclude, All in all, In essence

Common Grammar Mistakes

1. Articles: A, An, The

Articles can be tricky, but learning the rules makes them easier!

Basic Rules:

Article	When to Use	Example
A	Before consonant sounds	<i>a book, a university</i>
An	Before vowel sounds	<i>an apple, an hour</i>
The	Specific / already mentioned	<i>the book (I mentioned)</i>

When NOT to Use Articles:

Category	x Wrong	✓ Correct
Abstract Nouns (love, happiness, education)	The education is important.	Education is important.
Most Country Names (Korea, Japan, France)	I live in the Korea.	I live in Korea.
Languages (English, Spanish, Korean)	I speak the English.	I speak English.
Meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner)	I ate the breakfast.	I ate breakfast.
Academic Subjects (math, history, science)	I study the math.	I study math.
Sports & Games (soccer, basketball, chess)	She plays the soccer.	She plays soccer.
General Plural Nouns (dogs in general, students)	The dogs are loyal.	Dogs are loyal.

 Exception: Use "the" with USA, UK, Philippines, Netherlands (plural/union names)

2. Subject-Verb Agreement

Singular subjects need singular verbs; plural subjects need plural verbs. The subject and verb must always match!

✗ Wrong	✓ Correct
The students was tired.	The students were tired.
Everyone have their opinion.	Everyone has an opinion.
The news are interesting.	The news is interesting.

💡 Always SINGULAR: everyone, someone, anybody, each, either, neither, news, mathematics

💡 Tip: Prepositional phrases (of, with, in) can be confusing. Find the real subject!

Example: "The box of chocolates **is** on the table." (box is the subject, not chocolates)

3. Run-on Sentences

Don't join two complete sentences without proper punctuation. Each sentence has a subject and verb — mashing them together creates a run-on.

✗ Wrong (Run-on)	✓ Correct
I like pizza it is delicious.	I like pizza because it is delicious.
She ran fast she won the race.	She ran fast, so she won the race.

💡 **3 Ways to Fix Run-on Sentences:**

1. Add a period: "I like pizza. It is delicious."
2. Add a conjunction: "I like pizza because it is delicious."
3. Use a semicolon: "I like pizza; it is delicious."

4. Comma Splice

A comma alone cannot join two complete sentences. This mistake is similar to a run-on!

✗ Wrong (Comma Splice)	✓ Correct
She studied hard, she passed.	She studied hard, so she passed.
It was raining, we stayed inside.	It was raining, so we stayed inside.

💡 **Remember FANBOYS! For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So**

Add one of these conjunctions after the comma: comma + FANBOYS

Or replace the comma with a semicolon (;)

Words to Avoid

1. Overused Transitions

Instead of...	Use these...
And / Also	Furthermore, Moreover, In addition, Additionally
But	However, Nevertheless, On the contrary, Yet
So	Therefore, Consequently, As a result, Thus

2. Vague Words

Avoid	Use Instead
good	beneficial, effective, valuable, excellent, remarkable
bad	harmful, detrimental, negative, problematic, flawed
thing / stuff	factor, element, aspect, issue, concept, phenomenon
many / a lot	numerous, significant, substantial, extensive, countless

3. Personal Pronouns

<p>⚠ In academic writing, avoid using I, You, We!</p> <p>Reason: Academic writing should maintain an objective and formal tone.</p>	
x Avoid	✓ Use Instead
I think homework is important.	Homework is essential for learning.
You should eat healthy food.	Students should eat healthy food.
We need to protect the environment.	Society must protect the environment.

Conclusion Do's and Don'ts

✓ DO	x DON'T
Restate thesis in new words	Add new information
Summarize main points briefly	Start with "In conclusion"
End with thought-provoking statement	Use "and stuff" or vague phrases

Example Conclusions:

x Weak:

"In conclusion, I think school uniforms are good. They help students and staff. That's why schools should have them."

✓ Strong:

"Ultimately, school uniforms create a more focused learning environment by reducing social pressure, promoting equality, and allowing students to concentrate on academics. As schools continue to seek ways to improve student success, uniform policies deserve serious consideration."