

Chapter 1

The Basics

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Essential essay writing skills are the same regardless of instructor or course. These skills include _____.
 - a) organizing ideas
 - b) making points
 - c) supporting points
 - d) All of the above
2. All good writers are _____.
 - a) reluctant readers
 - b) average readers
 - c) avid readers
 - d) recreational readers
3. _____ is the fundamental purpose of writing.
 - a) Clearly communicating ideas to an audience
 - b) Fulfilling assignment requirements
 - c) Being grammatically correct
 - d) Expressing as many thoughts as possible
4. Coherence in writing means _____.
 - a) maintaining a single focus
 - b) using the right amount of evidence
 - c) having a debatable thesis
 - d) making sure ideas follow logically from one idea to the next
5. A doctor saying the term “myocardial contusion” is an example of _____.
 - a) cliché
 - b) gerund
 - c) jargon
 - d) idiom
6. The purpose of an academic essay is to _____.
 - a) explain what you think
 - b) summarize relevant information
 - c) demonstrate what you’ve learned
 - d) A and C

7. Wordiness is _____.

- a) using many words when a few will do
- b) using fancy vocabulary
- c) writing concisely
- d) making your writing enjoyable for the reader

8. English courses _____.

- a) test your ability to memorize
- b) test how well you remember your professor's arguments
- c) test your ability to communicate ideas
- d) test your love of literature and poetry

9. You should read the instructions for the assignment _____.

- a) as soon as you get it
- b) multiple times during the drafting stage
- c) before handing in your completed essay
- d) All of the above

10. _____ are the three steps of the writing process.

- a) Writing, reading, and researching
- b) Planning, developing, and revisiting
- c) Drafting, referencing, and editing
- d) Planning, drafting, and editing

11. To support your points, always remember to _____.

- a) repeat the idea
- b) give sufficient explanation
- c) give clear examples
- d) B and C

12. A casual conversation requires approximately _____ words.

- a) 200,000
- b) 20,000
- c) 2,000
- d) 200

13. When compared to conversation, which of the following is a disadvantage of written language?

- a) the time it takes to craft the document
- b) lack of tone of voice
- c) the need to edit and revise
- d) informality

14. Academic style is _____.

- a) personal
- b) conversational
- c) impersonal
- d) subjective

15. To write in academic style, _____.

- a) avoid using first or second person
- b) avoid transition signals
- c) use slang
- d) use vague vocabulary

16. _____ is the best way to learn the conventions of the written form, that is, the words, structures, style, and tone that writers use.

- a) Planning
- b) Reading
- c) Practicing
- d) Drafting

17. Critical thinking means _____.

- a) evaluating arguments
- b) organizing thoughts
- c) seeing relationships between ideas
- d) All of the above

18. _____ is an example of critical thinking.

- a) Appreciating other points of view
- b) Summarizing the ideas of others
- c) Citing sources
- d) Paying attention to formatting

19. The ability to think deeply requires asking which questions?

- a) "Why?" and "Who?"
- b) "Where?" and "When?"
- c) "How?" and "Why?"
- d) "What?" and "Why?"

20. Critical, deep thinking often involves _____.

- a) observing how others think
- b) using personal experience
- c) spending more time researching a topic

d) All of the above

21. Staring at a blank screen, feeling paralyzed is an example of _____.

- a) brain freeze
- b) author anchor
- c) writer's block
- d) academic freedom

22. _____ will help you commit your ideas to paper.

- a) Studying for another class
- b) Taking a walk
- c) Reading
- d) Journal writing

23. It is best to write _____.

- a) on a computer or tablet
- b) by hand
- c) by hand sometimes and on a computer or tablet other times
- d) on Twitter, 140 characters at a time

24. When you receive feedback (corrections and comments) from your instructor, it's best to _____.

- a) tuck it in a drawer and forget about it
- b) go over it immediately
- c) only look at the feedback if the mark is low
- d) read it, but do not ask your instructor about it

25. Mistakes are _____.

- a) inevitable
- b) no big deal
- c) painful to look at, so best to avoid thinking about
- d) learning opportunities

26. When editing, writers need to be _____.

- a) reckless
- b) reluctant
- c) ruthless
- d) reserved

27. If an error is fossilized, it _____.

- a) appears early in your essay
- b) has been around a long time
- c) has become a habit

d) cannot be fixed

28. Correcting involves _____.

- a) rewording
- b) fixing mistakes
- c) deleting unnecessary words and sentences
- d) moving entire sections to better organize your ideas

29. While many can be useful, you should be careful with grammar and essay writing resources on the Internet because _____.

- a) they are too easy to find
- b) they contain too much jargon
- c) they focus too much on exercises
- d) they are not vetted by editors

30. Active learners retain more than passive learners. Become an active learner by _____.

- a) taking notes
- b) attending instructor office hours
- c) participating in class discussion
- d) All of the above

Short Answer Questions

1. At the most essential level, essay writing teaches one how to organize information, make points, and support them. How might these skills be useful in the workplace?
2. It is the writer's responsibility to impart clear meaning. What are some of the ways to write clearly and concisely?
3. What are some errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation that can be more easily forgiven in terms of communication? Which errors cannot be so easily forgiven?
4. Why is it important to limit wordiness in your writing?
5. Why is it crucial to answer the question your instructor asked on the assignment or exam sheet?
6. How would a question that asks you to *describe* differ from one that asks you to *analyze*?

7. What does the planning step of the writing process involve? Why is this step important?
8. What does the drafting step of the writing process involve? Why is this step essential?
9. What does the editing step of the writing process involve? Why is this step significant?
10. Why is it not a good idea for students to try to bluff their way through an essay? What happens when they do?
11. What is the benefit of choosing a topic that you are comfortable with or you find interesting? Why might it be better to choose one that you know little about?
12. When brainstorming, is it better to brainstorm on one side or more than one side of the topic? Regardless of your choice, be clear why.
13. What are some of the key differences between spoken and written language? What do we learn about writing because of these?
14. Why do students not need to write “I think” or “in my opinion” in their essays? Why is it better to avoid doing so?
15. Why should students avoid words like “thing” or “stuff” in academic writing?
16. Why should students limit questions when writing in academic style?
17. Why is it important to avoid using “you” (second person) in essays?
18. Good writers are also avid readers. What are some strategies to becoming a better reader?
19. What is critical thinking? Why is it important that students develop this ability?
20. When completing the readings for class, what can you do to retain more information about those stories or articles?
21. What are some techniques to overcoming writer’s block? Why do they work?
22. Why is it important to know your strengths *and* weaknesses as a writer?
23. What is the difference between correcting and editing?

24.What are some helpful grammar and writing resources?

25.Why is communicating with your instructor beneficial?

Answer Key

Multiple Choice Questions

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|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. d (p. 1) | 16. b (p. 9) |
| 2. c (p. 1) | 17. d (p. 10) |
| 3. a (p. 1) | 18. a (p. 10) |
| 4. d (p. 2) | 19. c (p. 10) |
| 5. c (p. 3) | 20. d (p. 10) |
| 6. d (p. 3) | 21. c (p. 11) |
| 7. a (p. 3) | 22. d (p. 11) |
| 8. c (p. 3) | 23. c (p. 11) |
| 9. d (p. 4) | 24. b (p. 11) |
| 10. d (p. 4–5) | 25. d (p. 11) |
| 11. d (p. 6) | 26. c (p. 12) |
| 12. c (p. 6) | 27. c (p. 12) |
| 13. b (p. 7) | 28. b (p. 12) |
| 14. c (p. 7) | 29. d (p. 13) |
| 15. a (p. 8) | 30. d (p. 13) |

Short Answer Questions

1. Answers may vary depending on the industry. Generally, essay writing skills are valuable for communicating with bosses, colleagues, clients, and the general public, whether through reports, emails, advertisements, or a variety of other formats. For example, the ability to organize your ideas and make points to support them is essential for both writing essays and writing business reports. (p. 1)
2. Students should identify two or three of the following ways to write clearly and concisely:
 - writing in a grammatically correct manner,
 - focusing on coherence—making sure ideas logically flow together,
 - using transition signals,
 - understanding and considering audience and purpose,
 - limiting (or properly defining) jargon, and
 - eliminating wordiness. (pp. 2–3)
3. Some errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation that can be more easily forgiven are errors in singular and plural agreement. Errors that cannot be so easily forgiven include errors in parts of speech and verb forms. Other errors (such as proper possession or split infinitives) are up to the instructor's discretion. (p. 2)

4. It is important to limit wordiness in your writing because doing so is a sign of a weak vocabulary and includes unnecessary repetition. This is likely to make your writing unclear and frustrating to the reader. It also adds to your word count and many university classes have assignments that ask for concise arguments. (p. 3)
5. If you do not answer the question being asked on your assignment or exam, it makes the instructor doubt your ability to understand the material. Moreover, you do not fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment. (p. 4)
6. A question that asks you to describe would include the words *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where*. These are essentially non-debatable elements. However, a question that asks you to analyze requires you to interpret *why* the characters act the way they do, why that is significant, and why the non-debatable elements matter. (p. 4)
7. The planning step of the writing process involves both brainstorming and outlining. Brainstorming means coming up with ideas to include in the essay, whereas outlining involves organizing those ideas into a structure. Without planning, an essay lacks a sound topic or direction and may lack a clear, debatable thesis. (p. 5)
8. The drafting step of the writing process is the actual writing of the essay. It is a draft until the version is finalized and handed in to your instructor. You may write several drafts before you have a clean copy. Drafting helps you organize thoughts, strengthen your argument, and present your evidence. (p. 5)
9. The editing step of the writing process is the one in which you revise and correct your essay to make it the best you can. You can eliminate repetition, reduce wordiness, and rephrase to vary wording. Most importantly, the editing process is where you correct your grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. (p. 5)
10. When students lack background knowledge on a topic, they tend to repeat themselves, make gross generalizations, and wander off topic. Bluffing is not advised for university level papers as students are writing for a very informed audience. (p. 5)
11. A topic you are comfortable with will inspire you to start writing right away and allow you to brainstorm without much research. An interesting topic will be easier to write about because you are passionate about the topic. However, choosing a topic you know little about can also be beneficial as having to read more about the topic allows you to learn and pass that knowledge on to your reader. (p. 5)
12. It is better to brainstorm multiple sides of the topic for the following reasons:
 - It will help you generate more material for your essay
 - It will allow you to formulate a stronger, more well-informed argument that includes counter-arguments

- It will help you come up with corresponding advantages and disadvantages
- It will allow you to see which side of the debate you have better ideas for and therefore which side you should base your argument on (p. 5)

- 13.** Students should identify two or three of the following key differences between spoken and written language: A speaker immediately knows if the audience understands based on the feedback they give (facial expressions, asking questions, etc.). He or she can use tone of voice and gestures to impart meaning and can point to surroundings. Writers, on the other hand, lack these advantages. They must therefore use precise language and try to understand the needs of their audience. Written communication requires more from the communicator in terms of effort and time. As such, the planning, drafting, and editing steps are crucial for clarity. On the positive side, writers get the chance to reflect on their message and its delivery. (p. 7)
- 14.** Students do not need to write “I think” when writing essays because what they are writing is clearly their opinion (unless they say otherwise), so using such phrases is redundant and adds wordiness and informality. (p. 8)
- 15.** Students should avoid words such as “thing” or “stuff” because use of such words leads to imprecise, vague writing. “Thing” or “stuff” can always be specified to provide more meaning. (p. 8)
- 16.** Students should limit questions because, rhetorical or otherwise, they give a more conversational, less formal tone to their writing. In addition, questions force your reader into providing answers when your argument should be the focus of the essay. (p. 8)
- 17.** It is important to avoid using the word “you” in essays because it can be confusing: it can refer to the reader, or people in general. It is particularly confusing should the writer switch between pronouns such as “they” or “you.” “You” is also conversational and therefore informal. (p. 8)
- 18.** Students should identify two or three of the following strategies to becoming a better reader: Read a variety of materials, read at a level that is challenging but not too difficult, read about subjects you are interested in (and use those to expand into other subject areas), pay attention to language while reading, and keep a reading journal. (p. 9)
- 19.** Critical thinking is evaluating, seeing relationships between ideas, and organizing thoughts. Critical thinking is important in order to express your ideas and provide analysis of course materials, rather than just a summary of them. Critical thinking is about “why?” and “how?” instead of “who?,” “what?,” “when?,” and “where?” (p. 10)

- 20.** To retain more information from your readings, set aside appropriate time in order to be able to read the story more than once and look up words and references you do not understand. It is also helpful to prepare questions and comments for the class discussion and engage in that discussion. (p. 10)
- 21.** You can overcome writer's block by learning more about the topic, the writing process, and standard essay requirements. After doing so, you will have more information to get started and a much clearer idea of the path you need to take to write the essay. Journal writing can also be helpful in that it takes away the pressure of someone reading your ideas, is cathartic, and allows you to express your frustrations (which may be interfering with your ability to write). (p. 11)
- 22.** Knowing your strengths will allow you to focus on the areas that need improvement. Knowing your weaknesses will allow you to learn from mistakes and seek help to improve those areas. (p. 11)
- 23.** Correcting involves fixing mistakes, but editing is on a larger scale. When you edit, you find ways to reword something, you may delete unnecessary words and sentences, and you may move entire sections around to find the best way to organize your ideas. (p. 12)
- 24.** Students should identify two or three of the following helpful grammar and writing resources: word-processor spelling and grammar checker, dictionary and thesaurus, school tutorial services such as writing centres, usage guides and grammar books, and the Internet. (pp. 12–13)
- 25.** Establishing a good rapport with your instructor not only helps you improve as a writer, but gives the instructor a sense of your ability and the effort you are putting into the course, which may help participation marks and your overall mark in the course. (p. 13)