

Blueprint for Organising an Extended Response

These pointers are a starting point only for learning how to write an extended response. The framework sounds (and is) mechanical and unimaginative, but it is a beginning. Once the ideas for how to start are understood it will get easier (I promise you!).

How about this for a beginning?

An extended response, an account, a long writing task etc. can be satisfying to read and write, if it gives the sense of being a well-considered, well-expressed, well-ordered expression of thought.

Do you believe this or do you think that an extended response is just something that you have to do and that some teacher is being very unfair expecting you to be able to do it? The reality is that it is a skill that you need both now and in the future.

Here is a plan for the ordering of ideas in a typical assignment, extended response or examination question. The plan is very generalised and should obviously be changed when necessary.

1. An introduction should clearly and immediately state the aim or the case to be argued. Subtle and devious methods of leading the reader into the thought are out of place in a short extended response unless they are extremely brief. Generally, the first sentence should state the case. However, do not begin 'No I don't agree' or 'Yes I do agree with the statement'.
The second and subsequent sentences of the introduction should consist of a summary of main points to be raised in the response. When the reader has finished reading the introduction they should be quite prepared for the line of thought that the whole response will take.
2. The second paragraph should begin with a topic sentence which states the direction of thought of the entire paragraph. The reader should have already been prepared for this thought by its summary in the second sentence of the introduction. Any illustrations (or examples) of the thought must be relevant. You, as the writer, should not assume that the reader will link this example to the idea, or idea to idea; everything must be clearly explained, and the writer must spare no trouble to do this, even if you feel that you are labouring the obvious. The trick is to pretend that the reader knows nothing about what you are writing and as such you are giving all the information necessary to make the reader knowledgeable about the topic. If the paragraph is long or involved, a re-statement of the original topic sentence may be necessary.
3. The third, fourth and following paragraphs should be composed in the same way.
4. The summary or conclusion is vitally important in most extended responses. It should co-ordinate the ideas expressed through the discussion, analysis,

comparison, description etc., and tie them back to the aim of the question as it was originally given. If there is no summary or conclusion, a demand is made on the reader to connect all the ideas for themselves. They may be unwilling or unable to do this and your lower than expected mark could reflect this. If a conclusion is not reached by you, the writer, then the effectiveness of the response can be greatly reduced.

Thoughts from Tweed

- An extended response is like a debate:
First Speaker - Your introduction
Second Speaker - Body of the response
Third Speaker - the conclusion
Can you imagine a debate with one of the speakers missing? An extended response is the same - you must have three distinct parts to any examination question, in class activity or research assignment.
- Write a brief plan of the response before you start writing
- Write a rough draft of the response if it is a research activity and you have time to do it.
- Underline/highlight and define the key terms in the question before you begin to write so that you know what you have to concentrate on.
- Include relevant maps, diagrams and quotes where possible. Acknowledge quotes, sources, maps, tables and diagrams used throughout the extended response in footnotes and bibliographies. (See the website Literacy Skills for help here)
- Use a variety of references to obtain information for research tasks. Make sure that you list all references in the correct manner in a bibliography.
- Allocate yourself sufficient time to complete the written task by the time or date that it is due. In an exam plan the use of your time very carefully. Stick to time allocations very carefully.
- Use your own words and ideas wherever possible.
- Think and plan before you write.
- Experiment with mind maps - i.e. a series of words or phrases written down before you start that could help during the writing of the response.