

ENGLISH

Grammar: Essay Writing



ESSAY WRITING

What is an Essay?

An essay is a piece of writing that revolves around a particular theme and contains the academic opinions of the person writing it.

An essay can perform one or more of the following functions:

- Analyses and critically evaluates a topic
- Presents the writer's argument for or against an idea
- Describes something
- Narrates a story
- Persuades the reader

Aldous Huxley described essay as "A literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything".

Characteristics of a Good Essay

- **Brevity:** Express what you want concisely. Do not beat around the bush.
- **Coherence:** Every sentence and paragraph should flow smoothly and logically from the previous one. A clumsily written essay reflects not only the lack of preparation but also the absence of clarity of thought.
- **Unity:** The essay should never stray from its main purpose. Different points of view can be introduced, but they should all be used for the same subject.
- **Lucidity:** The essay should be easy to read and understand. Using tough words or difficult phrases may impress a few, but can confuse many others. Great writers are praised not only for their beautiful ideas but also for the simplicity of their language.

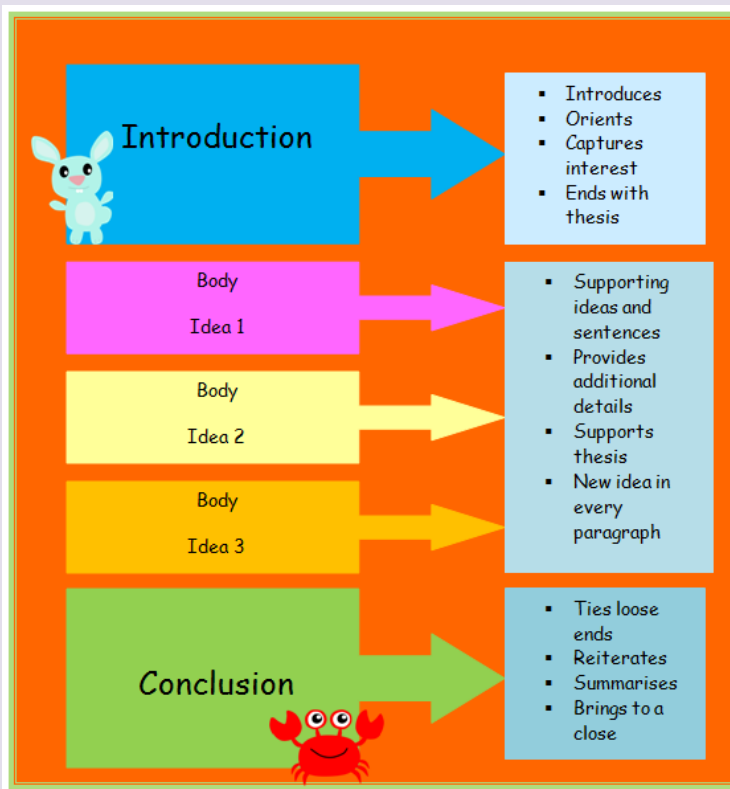
Objective of Essay Writing

Essay writing often forms a part of English written exams to test the ability of students to

- **Think critically:** Critical thinking involves understanding the task at hand and evaluating it appropriately.
- **Structure ideas logically:** The essay has to be structured and coherent. The ideas have to neatly flow from one paragraph to the other.
- **Express views eloquently:** The student should be fluent in the language he or she is writing in. Ideas when presented shoddily may not make the right impact.

Parts of an Essay

- **Introduction:** It constitutes the opening paragraph of the essay.
 - It helps the reader get oriented with the topic.
 - It states the purpose of the essay.
 - It captures the interest of the reader.
 - It presents the general idea of the essay.
 - It often ends with the thesis or the main idea of the essay.
- **Body (Supporting Paragraphs):** They constitute the supporting sentences and ideas.
 - They provide the reader with additional details about the main idea.
 - They support the thesis of the writer.
 - There is no fixed number of supporting paragraphs.
 - Ideally, every supporting paragraph should contain a different idea.
- **Conclusion:** It constitutes the ending paragraph(s) of the essay.
 - It ties up loose ends of the paragraph
 - It helps in reiterating or highlighting the main idea.
 - It summarises all the arguments.
 - It brings the essay to a logical close.
 - It never ends in a detail.



Example:

Introduction:

- The proverb is explained and the reader is oriented.
- The main idea or thesis is stated.

A Stitch in Time Saves Nine

Many of us have the bad habit of procrastinating. We leave for tomorrow what we can do today. A small tear on a garment when left ignored can expand and become a gaping hole. Similarly, small tasks that could be completed promptly can add into a big mountain of responsibilities. The proverb thus implies that the correct measure taken at the right time can help avert bigger troubles.

Body:**Idea 1**

- Supports the main idea through an example.

Imagine your exams were due in a month. What would you do? Would you keep procrastinating and leave all the studies for the last week? Or would you immediately start planning your timetable for exam preparations? If you keep procrastinating till the last date, you would be left with a mountain of studies that may become impossible to scale. You may panic and forget everything you have studied. You would be left with no time for revision. Had you started in advance, you may not only have finished your studies but also have had enough time to revise.

Body:**Idea 2**

- Supports the main idea through an example.

Similarly, people also have a habit of neglecting small health issues. It may be that they fear visiting the doctor or they are loath to do so. But these small health issues if treated at the right time can be life saving. Instead, if the issues are neglected, over time they become more serious and life threatening. Diseases like cancer can be treatable if detected at the right time. Ignoring symptoms for a long time can result in dire consequences.

Body:**Idea 3**

- Supports the main idea through an example.

Bad behaviour in adults is more egregious than that in children. Some people grow up to be obnoxious and cruel because they were not corrected when they were young. Irresponsible adults never encourage their children to rectify their behaviour. Such children grow up seeing no wrong in their actions. They become flawed human beings because they weren't figuratively given a 'stitch' in time.

Conclusion:

- The main idea or thesis of the essay is reiterated.
- The essay is brought to a close.

Therefore, the adage, „A stitch in time saves nine' rings true. People suffer when they forget the importance of timely action. Although it may not be advisable to always act in haste, prudent decisions should be taken at the right time to avoid any kind of undesirable consequences.

Types of Essays

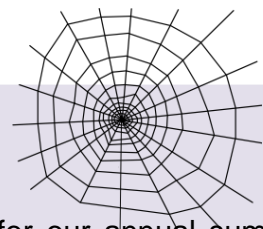
Narrative Essay: A narrative essay tells the reader a story or narrates an incident. This type of composition is addressed in detail in the chapter „Introduction to Story Writing“.

The characteristics of narrative essays are

- They follow a chronological order.
- They may contain firsthand accounts of the narrator.
- They may use first person, second person or third person narrative techniques.
- They may contain dialogues or conversations between characters.
- They use vivid descriptions of scenes, characters and moods in the story.
- They can contain elements of suspense or twists in the conclusion.

Sample 1

Lost and Found



In the summer of 2013, Nakul, Rishab and I went to Misty Valley for our annual summer vacation. There we rented an old colonial style mansion for our stay. The locals tried to dissuade us by saying that unearthly mishaps have been known to happen there in the dead of the night. Nevertheless, we still decided to stay there. The mansion was situated atop a mountain and offered a panoramic view of the entire valley.

We reached there about 10 pm and caught a sight of the mansion drenched in moonlight. We were greeted at the door by a strange looking man who was the housekeeper. He and his assistant unloaded our luggage and took us to our rooms. At dinner, Karamchand, the housekeeper, had a few words for us, "After dinner, kindly retire to your rooms for sleep. I advise you not to loiter around this mansion at night: it is very risky." I was filled with a sense of curiosity about Karamchand's words. Rishab said, "Let's stop dwelling on what he said and quietly go to sleep." But I wasn't convinced; I wanted to know the reason for the housekeeper's warning. My mind was abuzz with thoughts.

After the two fell asleep, I tiptoed out of my room with a torch in my hand. I saw a huge bookshelf with a big book sticking out. As soon as I tried to push the book back in the floor beneath my feet opened and I went down a slide kicking and screaming. I realised that I was stuck in a labyrinth. Huge rats ran past my feet and I was mortally afraid of being lost here forever. I broke into a sweat when I heard the rattling of chains and the sound of footsteps behind me. I prayed for my dear life and scampered through the endless maze. Awaiting a dreadful fate, I lay hiding behind some old boxes.

In the morning, I was amazed to see the faces of my friends staring back at me. I hugged them in happiness since I thought I would be lost here forever. Nakul said, "Good going champ! We notified the police when we couldn't find you. Little did we know that you would help them uncover Karamchand's illegal liquor den?" I replied sheepishly, "Yeah, I had a hint. That's why I ventured out!"

Descriptive Essay: A descriptive essay simply describes something to the reader.

The characteristics of descriptive essays are

- They appeal to one or more of the five senses of the reader—sight, smell, sound, taste and feel.
 - **Sight:** „The light travelled through the canopy of leaves to break into various fragments. The flowers in various colours stood in full bloom.'
 - **Smell:** „As soon as you enter her house, you will be greeted by the fresh, warm and savoury smell of bread baking. You also catch a citrusy whiff of her famous lemon pie.'
 - **Sound:** „The corridor reverberated with the sound of sharp clicks emanating from the heels of somebody's shoes. The sounds were well spaced with a difference of a second between each click.'
 - **Taste:** „As soon as I bit into the exotic-looking fruit, my mouth was flooded with its succulent juices. It was the tastiest thing I had ever had.'
 - **Feel:** „Tinkerbelle my Persian cat brushed against my face in a rare show of affection. Her soft, cottony fur grazed against my chin and her pointy whiskers tickled me.'
- They try to replicate in the reader the emotions or feelings experienced by the writer.

Sample 2

Visit to a Zoo

One of my fondest childhood memories is visiting the City Zoo with my parents and my siblings. This year, I decided to relive those days by visiting the zoo. The City Zoo is just half-an-hour away from my house, so I decided to take the bus. Earlier that day, I had asked Mahesh my friend to come along and he obliged.

We reached there at 10 am and bought two tickets. A big iron gate opened into a wide garden with a cobblestone path. A deep canal ran alongside the path and we spotted some waterfowl in it enjoying a cool bath on the hot day. After walking for a while, we came across a small pool with lily pads floating on it. A large frog with a whimsical pattern on its body let out a low croak. We were momentarily startled but Mahesh and I had a hearty laugh afterwards.

We reached a large mesh enclosure that housed birds some of whose chattering could be heard at the gates of the zoo. There were various birds with attractive plumes and distinct voices. Mahesh, who is an amateur ornithologist, shared some interesting trivia about pelicans with me. After spending some time admiring the birds, we walked further left towards the large enclosures. Distinct growling sounds emanated from that side, and we immediately knew that we were in the regal presence of the king of the jungle, the majestic lion. The cage reeked of raw flesh and blood. Remains of the king's supper were strewn across the floor. The mighty king had been pacing left and right when we saw him. He momentarily looked at our faces and then continued pacing. To his left was the cage of the Bengal tiger who was sprawled across on a lazy bed of hay. Some hyenas were seen conniving like gossip mongers. Across the cages, on the other side of the path was the abode of the gentle giants, the elephants. One was trained to „bless' little children by touching the tops of their heads with its trunk. We promptly stood in line to receive our blessings.

We stayed at the zoo for long hours taking home the beautiful memories of the day. I really hope that we could visit the City Zoo again. Next time, I would persuade my family to come along.

Expository Essay: An expository essay explains an instruction, a process or a method. The purpose of such essays is to orient the reader with the knowledge the writer wishes to share.

The characteristics of expository essays are

- They present facts or details in an objective and organised manner.
- They provide information and analysis.
- They may use compare and contrast features.
- They may use the cause and effect method.

Sample 3

How do Volcanoes Erupt?

Scientifically speaking, a volcano is a rupture on the crust of a planet that becomes a vent for materials such as lava, volcanic ash and gases. Geographic structures such as volcanoes are connected to a magma chamber that is situated in the bowels of the earth. They are generally found where tectonic plates converge or diverge. Volcanoes have always inspired human curiosity since they have the power to destroy civilisations. How do volcanoes erupt? In this essay, we shall learn the detailed procedure of volcanic eruptions.

The temperature within the earth is extremely high. In such high temperatures, rocks are known to melt slowly. The molten rocks constitute a hot, thick liquid known as magma. Since it is lighter than the solid rock around it, magma rises and collects inside the magma chamber. In due course, some of this liquid pushes itself out of the vents and cracks in the earth's surface. The extreme pressure causes the liquid to exit in spurts. This phenomenon is known as a volcanic eruption.

However, not all eruptions are explosive. Sometimes when the lava is thin, it can flow out of the volcanic vent without any obstructions. Such eruptions seldom kill people because it moves at such a slow pace that people find enough time to escape. But sometimes when the magma is not very runny, it cannot flow out easily from the vent. The buildup of gases under the magma causes tremendous pressure buildup. The gases then burst out of the volcano causing a big eruption. The magma blasts into the air and solidifies into small particles known as tephra.



Tips for Writing an Essay

Preparation

- Read: The more you read, the better you get. Reading essays will give you inspiration to write. It will fill you with knowledge which you can use to enrich your writing.
- Write: Practise writing essays. This will give you the necessary confidence that you require during the exams. Writing also sharpens your thought process preparing you to deal with essay questions with much ease.

Writing

- Think about the idea given in the title or the prompt.
 - What type of essay will be appropriate?
 - What could be the main ideas?
 - How to write the introduction, the body and the conclusion?
 - Write all the ideas.
- Structure your essay.
 - Create an outline of your essay.
 - Do not use more than two sentences for introduction and conclusion.
 - Plan your essay before instead of writing spontaneously.
 - Arrange the ideas in a chronological order if you are attempting a narrative essay.
 - Arrange them in the increasing order of importance while attempting a descriptive or an expository essay.
 - Remember to conclude the essay.
- Use a consistent tense form while writing the essay.
 - Express clearly.
 - Be original in your ideas. Don't be afraid to think out of the box.
 - Use your own memories or your experiences to add to the essay.
 - Recheck for any grammatical errors after having written the paragraph.

Samples

Narrative Essays

Sample 4

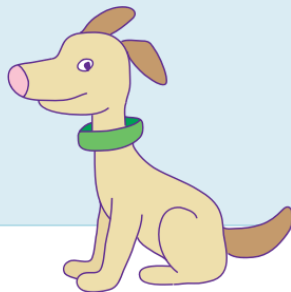
A Morning Adventure

I decided to take my dog Bowwow for a walk one cold December morning. An enthusiastic pup, he always looked forward to morning walks. I once found him in a gutter injured and famished. Being overwhelmed by his condition, I decided to bring him home. My parents and my elder brother were not very happy about the prospects of keeping a pet. I was allowed to keep the pup only under one condition—if I agreed to take its full responsibility. Three months down the line, things are looking up for Bowwow and me; we found in each other a friendship that is true and a love that is unconditional.

Every day, we take a few rounds around the garden. Sometimes, I let Bowwow off the leash and let him go wherever he wants. With me following him closely, there were no chances of him wandering off. He would have a great time socialising with the other dogs who accompany their masters to the park. Sometimes the two of us would race each other to the main gate and back.

The unthinkable happened on that cold December morning. I had let Bowwow off the leash as he explored the garden full of bushes, trees and fresh blossoms intrepidly. I was always two steps behind lest I lose him somewhere. Suddenly the annoying secretary of our housing society Mr. Sharma appeared out of nowhere. He was on his morning walk too. He called out to me from the other side of the garden, “Oh Saurabh! Tell your father to call me. It’s urgent!” I turned around to face him for five seconds and when I turned back Bowwow was gone. I could feel my heart beating inside my chest. Here is a tiny pup, weak and helpless, lost in this big maze of trees and bushes. Some older feral dogs are known to attack the tiny ones.

I searched high and low pressing his favourite squeaky toy with the expectation that he would respond to the sound. But there were no signs of the pup. Heartbroken, I headed back home to get some help. When I reached the door steps I saw my furry friend waiting for me. Bowwow had somehow sniffed his way back home. I still don’t know how he disappeared under, but I was very happy to see him again!



Sample 5

A Close Shave with Death

My cousin's wedding was to be held in a resort in Matheran last year. The whole family had been planning the trip for a long time. I was the least bit enthused since I found family gatherings rather boring. My family consists of boastful aunts and uncles who are obsessed with one upping each other and cousins who only talk about academics. I had a reputation of being negligent towards my studies mainly because I devoted a lot of my time towards sports and extracurricular activities. As you may have already guessed, I was treated like a nincompoop.

When the day of the trip arrived, my relatives decided to book a big van to the hill station. It was the month of July and the rains were lashing in full force. The route to the hill station was tortuous and dangerous, but my family insisted on taking the van. I read in the papers that the infamous route, Snake Pass, had been claiming lives every monsoon since the drivers find it very difficult to negotiate these sharp curves. I presented to my relatives the concerns about travelling by road in the monsoons. I suggested we take the train instead as it may be safer. As expected, my suggestions were shot down.

I would like to believe that an unknown force was at work that day and it was on my side. The van driver who was supposed to take us to our destination cancelled due to some health problems. No other driver was available that day and the bus reservations were full. We were left with the only option of travelling by train which was my original suggestion. Left with no options, the elders had to book train tickets to the hill station.

The journey was pleasant, thanks to the weather outside. My grumbling relatives were now singing and snacking their way to the destination. We reached within two hours which came as a surprise to my relatives. The road journey may have taken 6 hours in the slow moving traffic. Next day, pre-wedding functions were in full swing when someone brought us the morning papers. On the front page was a news article that read, „FIVE ACCIDENTS IN A SINGLE DAY: THE CURSE OF THE SNAKE PASS'. Apparently, the killer road had caused five accidents on the day we were supposed to have travelled by the van.

I accomplished two things that day: One, we cheated death by taking the train instead of a van. Two, my relatives no longer treat me like a nincompoop anymore. They realised that despite my age and my lack of bookish knowledge, I can think more sensibly than they do.

Descriptive Essays

Sample 6

A Circus Show

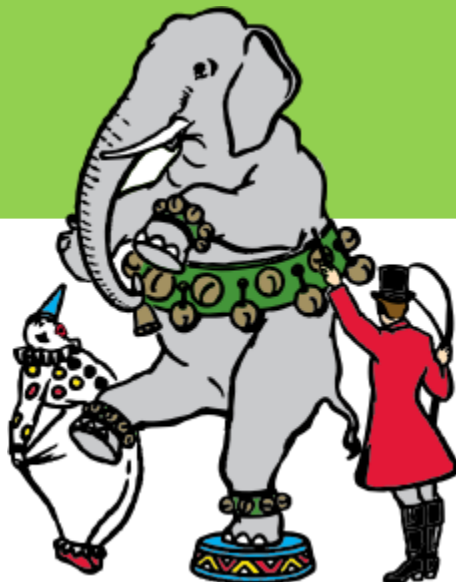
Last month, 'The Great Indian Circus' came to town. They visit my hometown once in five years and always put up a wonderful show for the townsfolk. This time too, it had managed to attract a large crowd. Hundreds of people, young and old, thronged the grounds trying to get tickets to the show. I was never fascinated by circuses since I was born to the era of easy entertainment. Spoilt for choice by the electronic media, I and millions of other children like me would resort to the television, the computer or the smartphone for amusement. My mother insisted on taking me to the circus since I hadn't seen one all my life. I had heard about agile men and women performing death-defying stunts, animals who follow orders from ring masters and clowns who leave the audience in splits with their antics.

So we decided to visit the circus on Sunday. After having purchased the tickets, Mom and I headed towards the circus tent to take our seats. The tent was humungous, colourful and brightly lit. Inside, there was a round arena that was decked up with whimsical lights. The audience sat on the seats arranged around the arena. The show started at 7 pm sharp. A pageant of performers and animals welcomed the guests with fanfare. A group of gymnasts began with a trapeze show. The girls and boys with lithe bodies swung from bars and ropes exhibiting their gymnastic prowess.

A man on a motorcycle performed a death-defying stunt called the 'Globe of Death'. He rode his motorcycle inside a huge mesh ball vertically and horizontally. The feats lasted for an hour and then the cyclists appeared on the stage. They performed various feats and left the audience spellbound.

The ringmaster brought his trained lion for the daring 'Ring of Fire' feat. On being instructed by the ringmaster, the lion jumped through a series of concentric rings that were set ablaze. The elephant amused the audience by kicking a large football into a goalpost. Later, it even played cricket by striking the balls thrown to it by the clowns.

I went in as a person indifferent to the circus and came out as someone who was thoroughly impressed with the circus. I couldn't help but marvel at the skills exhibited by the performers—human and animal. I thanked my mother for having taken me to the circus.



Sample 7

My Friend Dr Patil

Dr Patil was my best friend. His wife, a woman with a permanent scowl on her face believed that we made strange companions, me a preschooler and he a retired college principal. Our friendship was stranger than fiction. No one in the world could fathom what a 4 year old and a sixty-five year old had in common. But truth be told, he, Patil Uncle as I called him, was the truest friend I ever had.

Dr Patil was an elderly man with a heart that refused to age. Highly learned with multiple degrees and doctorates, he was the principal of a reputed college in the city. Many former students would throng his house on Gurupurnima and Teachers Day to seek his blessings. He would sit with them for hours regaling them and giving them his good counsel. Mr Patil had a beautiful soul that would draw the young and the old towards him.

He had a slight frame and with a slightly protruding belly formed out a habit of slouching against the desk. His countenance resembled a meditative Buddha we see in paintings. His favourite garb was a white vest and a matching pair of pyjamas. He was swarthy and his grey hair grew sparsely on his pate. His daily staple was a glassful of apple juice and the Charminar brand cigarette which he smoked secretly away from the prying eyes of his wife.

In the winter of his life, he found unlikely friends, me and an orange cat named Mani. Mani was a permanent fixture at his house often dozing off at his feet. My day started with a breakfast of milk, apples and a dry bhakri with him. My mother recounts that I refused to eat unless he fed me the first morsel. From his huge treasure trove of books, he picked stories to read out to me. He used to narrate cautionary tales of young boys and girls who disobeyed their parents. Each time I refused to eat my food or take my medicines, he would bribe me with sweetmeats and toys.

Mani the cat was not particularly fond of me. Maybe he thought I was taking Uncle away from him. Uncle taught me that animals were not like humans; they do not respond to kind words and greetings. Only the pure of heart can win the trust of animals. So he asked me to be patient and let the cat come round to me. Eventually Mani did. He taught me the importance of being nice to everyone and laid the foundations for my morals and virtues.

When he passed away in his sleep, I was 9 years old. Back then, I was too young to realise the extent of my loss. I have made many friends since then, but none could come close to the near-perfect relationship that I shared with my mentor, teacher and guide.

Expository Essays

Sample 8

The Importance of Having a Reading Habit

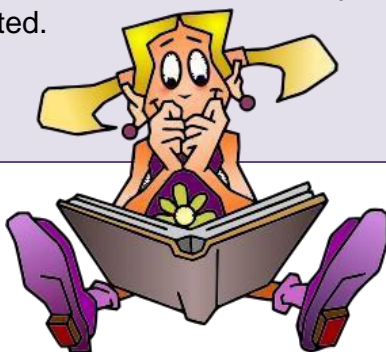
One may have wondered, “Is reading really that important?” Many students are averse to reading mainly because they find it boring compared to the other means of passing time. It requires concentration, it is time consuming and it requires the use of one’s brain. Why to read when there are video games to be played, movies to be watched and music to be listened to.

Reading is one of the most important cognitive skills that we can benefit from all our lives. It is a skill without which human beings cannot function in modern day society. The bane of boredom has pushed many to neglect developing their reading skills from a very young age. Proponents of alternative styles of learning may speak in favour of practical education and disregard inculcating reading ability in students. There is nothing more appalling than that. Let us explore the various benefits of having a healthy reading habit.

Reading helps sharpen the intellect. We indulge in physical exercises to keep our bodies healthy. Reading is the perfect exercise for the mind. Our brain, like our body, can get atrophied if it does not receive proper stimulation. When we read, the brain works hard to help you register the word and understand its meaning. The process enriches our understanding of the language and improves our communication skills. Everyone loves to speak but seldom does anyone want to listen. Listening is an important skill just like reading, and they both employ the same skill, focus. Readers learn to focus on the message conveyed by the writer. This in turn can improve their listening skills.

Reading enriches us with knowledge. We learn new things about the world around us through reading newspapers and magazines. We are introduced to different schools of thoughts and philosophies that help us shape our opinions. It also helps us relay our views to others thus facilitating an exchange of ideas. Today, information is easily accessible thanks to the Internet boom. Therefore, anybody who has a penchant for reading has an edge over the others.

Reading helps us amuse ourselves by fuelling our imagination. Reading a fantasy novel like ‘The Lord of the Rings’ helps us create worlds and characters inside our minds. It helps us in developing our creativity. Even to do mundane things in life we require reading skills. Imagine not being able to read the dosage for some medication or being unable to read instructions from a cookbook. Imagine taking too long to read and understand a Math problem. Everything requires good reading skills. We can therefore conclude that the importance of developing a healthy reading habit cannot be understated.



Sample 9

To Live on the Moon

Many space experts have pondered about the possibilities of living in outer space. The safest and the most viable option for most is the moon. The idea of building a lunar outpost has tickled the imagination of space explorers for years. This has caused scientists to actually study what it would be like to live on the moon.

In 1959, the Russians photographed the moon for the first time. Ten years later, NASA landed the Apollo 11 on the moon's surface with three astronauts for the first time in human history. Though the idea of living on the moon seems like a romantic one, the data collected through the exploration concludes otherwise.

A single lunar day is equal to two weeks on Earth. The daytime temperature is a hellish 123 degree Celsius and the nighttime temperature, a frigid minus 387 degrees. It is impossible to live under such conditions without any extra aid. It is common knowledge that the moon has no atmosphere and its surface is nothing but a big vacuum. Living without space suits would be impossible on the moon.

Building climate-controlled domes on the moon's surface could be one way of circumventing the problem. The surface under these domes could be supplied with artificially created atmosphere that is saturated with all the gases humans need for survival.

Low gravity poses another problem of living on the moon's surface. It is very difficult to walk on the lunar surface whose gravitational pull is only one-sixth of the Earth's. We may find ourselves tripping and falling trying to adjust to the low gravity. The only way of moving on the moon's surface is by hopping or bouncing.

