

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

"Before anything else, preparation is the key to success." - Alexander Graham Bell

The English Exit Exam is 4 hours long. Use this time well by following these guidelines. Students with accommodations with the SAAC may be granted more time. Come to the Academic Skills Centre to create an individualized plan.

ONE HOUR: READING AND COMPREHENSION

- **Underline** key words when you read the instructions to clarify what you have to do.
- **Begin reading** the type of text (short story or essay) with which you have more experience. Otherwise, read the first page of each reading and choose the one that is easiest to understand.
- Read your selection carefully. Make **notes** in the margins when you:
 - Identify **significant details**.
 - Recognize a **main idea** that is consistent throughout the reading. This is an idea you can develop in your essay. Most texts have more than one main idea. See the handout: RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA: SHORT STORIES.
 - Identify **techniques and devices** used by the author to communicate that main idea.
 - Find references that relate to that main idea. Ensure you have enough **support**.

ONE HOUR: PLANNING

- Decide the focus of your essay:
 - **WHAT** idea the author expresses (focus on the author's point, occasionally referring to techniques and devices)
 - **HOW** the author expresses an idea (focus on techniques and devices used to communicate an idea)
 - A combination of both **WHAT and HOW**
- Write down what you want to say as your **thesis statement**. See handout PHRASING TIPS.
- Based on your thesis, write an outline:
 - Begin by writing a simple list of **supporting points**.
 - Write the strongest three or four points as **topic sentences** that will form the basis of your body paragraphs.
 - Choose **two or three techniques and devices** that the author effectively uses to express the main idea. See handout: TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES.
 - Skim the reading again and choose specific **examples** from the text (two to three per body paragraph). Look for **key words** and **phrases** for short, effective quoting.
 - If you refer to examples from your own experiences, connect them well to your thesis.
- From this plan, write a draft of your **introduction**. Edit it to refine and finish planning your argument.



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Continued

ONE HOUR AND 30 MINUTES: WRITING

- Write slowly and carefully, checking the grammar and punctuation as you go.
- Due to time constraints, writing a complete rough draft is not recommended.

Introduction:

- Mention the author's full name, the title ("..."), and the genre (essay or short story).
- If you drafted an introduction before, write your revised version now.

Body Paragraphs:

- Write **topic sentences** for each supporting idea as opening sentences for each paragraph.
- Refer to **examples**: use short quotes or paraphrase. See handout: REFERRING TO A READING.
- Explain how these examples support each **idea** and how they relate back to your **thesis**.
- Write **concluding sentences** for each body paragraph that summarize what you have discussed. You can also include a **sentence that transitions** to the next paragraph.
- Mention the **author's last name** in each paragraph to keep your focus on the main idea.

Conclusion:

- **Restate** your thesis. Mention the **author's last name** again.
- Briefly **summarize** your supporting ideas.
- Share **any additional thoughts**, but be objective. Do not simply praise the author in a meaningless way. Include:
 - a critical judgment (strengths and weaknesses) **OR**
 - the importance of the author's idea and your response to the reading **OR**
 - insights into the author's beliefs, attitudes, or purpose for writing as you now understand them

30 MINUTES: PROOFREAD and EDIT

- If time is short, make sure your **introduction** and **conclusion** are clear and well-edited.
- Spelling counts, but not as much as grammar, punctuation, and correct word usage.
- Avoid overly complicated sentences; find simple and clear ways to state your idea.
- Your essay can be less formal than an academic essay, but avoid casual language.
- You may use 'I' and mention personal experiences if you relate them to the author's main idea.
- Integrate quotations into your own sentences. See handout: REFERRING TO A READING.
- Citations, page references, and bibliographies are not required.

Contact the Academic Skills Centre to come up with an individual plan.