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FREE RESOURCE — TEMPLATE

Essay Plan Framework

A plan-before-you-write template for timed and coursework essays: thesis line, paragraph planner with evidence and link, and a timing guide.

5 min	5	3	4
TO PLAN	PARAGRAPH SLOTS	TIMING GUIDES	BLANK PLANS

THESIS · PEEL · COUNTER-ARGUMENT · TIMING

PREPARED BY: BrightStudy

CATEGORY: Exam preparation

EDITION: 2026, A4 PDF

LATEST VERSION: brightstudy.ai/resources/essay-plan-framework

What is inside

Examiners can tell within a paragraph whether an essay was planned. A planned essay answers the question in the first sentence, makes one point per paragraph, uses evidence for each point and reaches a conclusion that follows from the argument. This framework gives you a five-minute plan that produces exactly that: a question analysis box, a thesis line, a paragraph planner with point, evidence, explanation and link for each paragraph, and a timing guide for 30, 45 and 60-minute essays. Two example plans show it working for a History and an English Literature question.

SECTIONS

1 How the plan works
2 Example plan: History
3 Example plan: English Literature
4 Essay plan 1
5 Essay plan 2
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WHO IT IS FOR

Students writing timed essays in History, English, Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Religious Studies and similar subjects, and undergraduates planning coursework essays.

WHAT IS INCLUDED

- Question analysis: command word, scope, and what a top answer must do
- Thesis line and counter-argument box
- Paragraph planner (point, evidence, explain, link) for up to five paragraphs
- Timing guides for 30, 45 and 60-minute essays
- Two worked example plans and four blank plans

01

How the plan works

1. Analyse the question: circle the command word, underline the scope (dates, texts, places), and write what a top answer must do in one line.
2. Write your thesis line: the answer plus the main reason.
3. Fill the paragraph planner: one point per paragraph, the evidence you will use, what it shows, and how it links back to the question.
4. Order the paragraphs: strongest point first, counter-argument second to last.
5. Write the conclusion plan: restate the judgement, name the deciding factor.
6. Check the timing guide and write finishing times beside each paragraph.

TIMING GUIDES

ESSAY LENGTH	PLAN	INTRODUCTION	EACH BODY PARAGRAPH	CONCLUSION	CHECK
30 minutes	4 min	3 min	6 min × 3	3 min	2 min
45 minutes	5 min	4 min	8 min × 4	4 min	3 min
60 minutes	6 min	5 min	9 min × 5	5 min	4 min

02

Example plan: History

"The Wall Street Crash was the main reason for the rise of the Nazi Party." How far do you agree? (45 minutes)

FIELD	PLAN
Command word and scope	How far do you agree: evaluate, both sides, judgement. Scope: Germany, 1929-1933.
Thesis	The Crash was the trigger rather than the main reason; it mattered because it exposed weaknesses that already existed in Weimar politics and Nazi organisation exploited them.
Paragraph 1 (strongest)	Point: the Crash caused mass unemployment. Evidence: 6 million unemployed by 1932; Nazi vote 2.6% (1928) to 37% (July 1932). Explain: economic despair made extremist promises attractive. Link: supports the statement.
Paragraph 2	Point: Weimar's structural weakness was prior. Evidence: proportional representation, Article 48, 1923 crisis. Explain: coalitions could not act; emergency rule normalised. Link: Crash hit a fragile system.
Paragraph 3	Point: Nazi organisation and propaganda. Evidence: Goebbels' campaigns, SA presence, Hitler's flights. Explain: other parties faced the same Crash but did not grow. Link: the Crash was necessary but not sufficient.
Paragraph 4 (counter)	Point: without the Crash, Nazis were declining. Evidence: 1928 result. Explain: shows the Crash's importance, but the response to it decided the outcome. Link: trigger, not cause.
Conclusion	Agree to a limited extent: the Crash was the decisive trigger, but structural weakness and Nazi exploitation turned a crisis into power.

03

Example plan: English Literature

How does Priestley present responsibility in An Inspector Calls? (45 minutes)

FIELD	PLAN
Command word and scope	How does … present: analyse methods (structure, character, language) and their effect. Whole play.
Thesis	Priestley presents responsibility as collective and inescapable, using the Inspector as a moral voice and the generational split to show who learns and who refuses.
Paragraph 1	Point: the Inspector as mouthpiece. Evidence: "We are members of one body". Explain: biblical register, direct address to the audience of 1945. Link: responsibility as a social, not private, duty.
Paragraph 2	Point: Mr Birling as the refusal. Evidence: "a man has to mind his own business", the Titanic speech. Explain: dramatic irony undermines his individualism. Link: the audience is positioned against him.
Paragraph 3	Point: Sheila and Eric as change. Evidence: "it's you two who are being childish". Explain: role reversal; the young accept responsibility. Link: hope rests with the next generation.
Paragraph 4	Point: structure. Evidence: the final phone call. Explain: the cycle restarts; refusing responsibility has consequences. Link: the play itself as a warning.
Conclusion	Responsibility is the play's central idea, presented through the Inspector's voice, the generational contrast and a structure that denies escape.

04

Essay plan 1

Question: _____

Time: _____

COMMAND WORD, SCOPE, WHAT A TOP ANSWER MUST DO	THESIS LINE (ANSWER + MAIN REASON)

PARAGRAPHS

#	POINT	EVIDENCE	EXPLAIN (WHAT IT SHOWS)	LINK TO QUESTION	FINISH BY
1					
2					
3					
4 (counter)					
5					

CONCLUSION: JUDGEMENT AND THE DECIDING FACTOR

05

Essay plan 2

Question: _____

Time: _____

COMMAND WORD, SCOPE, WHAT A TOP ANSWER MUST DO	THESIS LINE (ANSWER + MAIN REASON)

PARAGRAPHS

#	POINT	EVIDENCE	EXPLAIN (WHAT IT SHOWS)	LINK TO QUESTION	FINISH BY
1					
2					
3					
4 (counter)					
5					

CONCLUSION: JUDGEMENT AND THE DECIDING FACTOR

06

Essay plan 3

Question: _____

Time: _____

COMMAND WORD, SCOPE, WHAT A TOP ANSWER MUST DO

THESIS LINE (ANSWER + MAIN REASON)

PARAGRAPHS

#	POINT	EVIDENCE	EXPLAIN (WHAT IT SHOWS)	LINK TO QUESTION	FINISH BY
1					
2					
3					
4 (counter)					
5					

CONCLUSION: JUDGEMENT AND THE DECIDING FACTOR

07

Essay plan 4

Question: _____

Time: _____

COMMAND WORD, SCOPE, WHAT A TOP ANSWER MUST DO

THESIS LINE (ANSWER + MAIN REASON)

PARAGRAPHS

#	POINT	EVIDENCE	EXPLAIN (WHAT IT SHOWS)	LINK TO QUESTION	FINISH BY
1					
2					
3					
4 (counter)					
5					

CONCLUSION: JUDGEMENT AND THE DECIDING FACTOR

Keep going

BRIGHTSTUDY

This resource covers the part of studying that happens away from a screen. BrightStudy does the rest: upload your notes, slides or recordings and it turns them into Study Docs, flashcards and exam-style questions, then schedules your reviews with spaced repetition. There is a free plan to get started.

PAIRS WELL WITH EXAM PREPARATION

FEATURE	WHAT IT DOES	LINK
MCQs	Exam-style questions with answer explanations.	brightstudy.ai/features/mcqs
Progress Analytics	Track your study activity and performance.	brightstudy.ai/features/progress
Topic Analysis	Find stronger topics and areas that need attention.	brightstudy.ai/features/topic-analysis
AI Tutors	Ask questions and explore difficult concepts.	brightstudy.ai/features/ai-tutors

RELATED RESOURCES

RESOURCE	LINK
Exam Day Checklist	brightstudy.ai/resources/pre-exam-day-checklist
Past Paper Strategy Guide	brightstudy.ai/resources/past-paper-strategy-guide
Exam Error Log	brightstudy.ai/resources/exam-error-log



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