

Academic Writing, Understanding the Task

In academic writing, you must understand and answer the specific question you are asked, and not create your own question. This is why you must analyse the question. You should:

- Read the question at least twice.
- Look for the **task**, **topic** and **control** in the question.

The **task** is the instruction word – this tells you what you have to do.

The **topic** is the subject area – this tells you what you have to write about.

The **control** focuses the topic – this tells you what you specifically have to focus on.

1. Think of as many possible task words as you can and write them in the box below. Here are 2 to help you start.

| |
|------------------------------|
| <i>Describe Discuss</i> |
|------------------------------|

2. Read the Deforestation essay title below. Highlight the **task, **topic**, and **control**.**

Many of the world’s rainforests are being destroyed. Discuss the causes of this destruction focusing on logging, mining and agriculture. Analyse the effects, on the environment and on humans.

What will be the main idea/topic of the main body paragraphs?

Will you have: _____ 2 causes and 1 effect or _____ 1 cause and 2 effect

| Body Paragraph 1 | Body Paragraph 2 | Body Paragraph 3 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | |

3. Read the following essay title and highlight the *task*, *topic*, and *control*.

Many of the world’s rainforests are being destroyed. Discuss the causes of this destruction focusing on logging, mining and agriculture. Analyse the effects, on the environment and on humans.

What will each of the body paragraphs focus on? For each one, write the topic sentence below:

| Body Paragraph 1 | Body Paragraph 2 | Body Paragraph 3 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | |

4. Read the following essay title and highlight the *task*, *topic*, and *control*.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the seven ancient wonders. Describe them by focusing on what a ziggurat is, the gardens and how the gardens were irrigated.

What will each of the body paragraphs focus on? For each one, write the topic sentence below:

| Body Paragraph 1 | Body Paragraph 2 | Body Paragraph 3 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | |

5. Read the following essay title and highlight the *task*, *topic*, and *control*.

The rhino is close to extinction. Describe the problem and evaluate two possible solutions.

What will each of the body paragraphs focus on? For each one, write the topic sentence below:

| Body Paragraph 1 | Body Paragraph 2 | Body Paragraph 3 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | |