

One-Page Essay Guidelines

Simply put, a one-page essay is a condensed theme paper. Rather than choose three or four points to cover over a detailed paper of five or ten pages, your one-page essay will be more directed and, consequently, far shorter in length. There are three reasons that I've chosen essays over quizzes and exams as a preferred form of assessment.

- First, they require no exceptional memory skills or the ability to perform well under pressure; unlike quizzes, they are completed at home and at your own leisure.
- Second, they test your ability to critically respond to a piece of writing better than most quizzes; as long as you support your argument and write with articulation, there are no “wrong” answers.
- And finally, they allow for individual creativity, imagination, and expression.

Format

- Your name, course title, and period should appear (single spaced) at the top left corner
- Your essay's title should be centered above the body of your paper in the same font and size
- Margins should be set at 1 inch, and lines should be spaced at 1^{1/2} and left unjustified
- Your essay should be typed in 11-point Times New Roman font
- Your essay must be a minimum of 400 words but **must not exceed one page**—no exceptions

Content

For each essay, you will have only one question or topic that must be covered with focus and brevity. Because these essays are so short in length, your argument must remain narrow in focus, with all attention given to your thesis. Ramblings, needless information, fluff, and fillers must not be used to lengthen the essay, and will reflect poorly on your grade. However, all rules of composition still apply, and your argument must be supported by evidence from the text as well as your own *informed* opinion.

Grammar

As with content, the rules of grammar also apply. Remember that the function of good grammar is to breed clarity. The better your grammar is, the more clearly your thesis will resonate. Sentence fragments, run-ons, misspellings, and comma splices are cardinal offences. **Proofread your work!**

Grading

Each essay will be accompanied by a rubric, which will be used to determine your grade through both content and grammar. I'm not asking you to re-invent the wheel or write the next great American novel. I simply want you to bring together all we've discussed and all you've learned and to restate it as an argument addressing the topic—in an engaging and insightful fashion. Show me that you can talk about books and ideas in a mature manner. Remember the three “C's.” Be clear, concise, and creative.

A Good Paper . . .

Formatting

- follows the prescribed guidelines
- is line-spaced evenly and according to the guidelines
- uses the proper point size and font according to the guidelines
- uses one-inch margins on all four sides
- shows that you know how to properly format titles and quotes:
 - Quotation marks for poems, articles, stories, essays, and songs
 - Italics for books, movies, magazines, newspapers, and albums
 - Quotation marks around words and lines taken directly from the text
- includes a title that underscores the idea behind your thesis

Argumentation

- establishes a clear thesis in your opening paragraph
- is organized into paragraphs, each with a main idea that builds upon your thesis
- includes examples and details from the text that support and clarify your thesis
- supports its assertions through evidence
 - After each line, ask yourself “So what?” or “Why?” or “How?”
 - Try this formula: **assertion + analysis + example = evidence**

Finish

- is revised
- is proofread
- is polished

Common Mistakes

- Avoid extended or unnecessary definitions (*Webster’s* is not analysis)
- Possessive nouns and plurals—watch your apostrophes!
- Commas
 - *Let’s eat, mom.* vs. *Let’s eat mom.*
- Prepositions aren’t one-size-fits-all
 - *Kosinski’s purpose of writing this novel . . .*
 - *Because of the media we often judge ourselves on unrealistic standards.*
- Be graceful in your analysis—avoid clunky and unnecessary throat-clearing:
 - *An example of this would be . . .*
 - *This shows . . .*
 - *This includes . . .*
- Be graceful in general
 - Don’t say *got killed*
 - Say *died* or *lost their lives*