

Look at the question and problem and solution essay and do the exercises to improve your writing skills.

### Preparation

Circle the correct definition of these phrases.

1. to learn something by heart
  - a. to study something difficult
  - b. to feel passionate about something
  - c. to memorise something
2. to recite something
  - a. to think of an original idea
  - b. to repeat something from memory
  - c. to be unable to remember something
3. to have a lapse in concentration
  - a. to have a short period when you're unable to focus
  - b. to have a short period when you feel particularly awake and alert
  - c. to have a short period when you feel under pressure
4. to tackle a problem
  - a. to create a difficult situation for somebody
  - b. to feel defeated by an issue
  - c. to resolve or deal with an issue
5. to manage pressure
  - a. to force somebody to do something
  - b. to handle a stressful situation successfully
  - c. to be in a stressful job
6. to remedy a situation
  - a. to fix a bad situation
  - b. to discover a problem
  - c. to make a bad situation even worse

## Exam question

Write about the following topic.

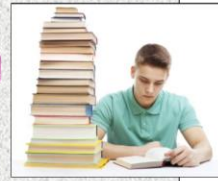
In some countries young people have little leisure time and are under pressure to work hard in their studies.

What do you think are the causes of this?

What solutions can you suggest?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.



Nowadays, many teenagers and young adults around the world have to spend most of their time studying in order to get top grades, a university place and a good job. For this reason, there is often little time left for hobbies or socialising. This essay will examine several causes of this situation and propose some solutions.

One of the main causes is exams. These are stressful experiences and most students take a huge number of them during their school career. Exams can also be unfair, since the best grades are often not obtained by the most intelligent students but by those with the best memories. This is because many exams require students to learn facts by heart and then recite them in the exam room. Hundreds of precious hours are spent memorising things, but some experts in education think it could be better to learn how to apply the knowledge for some practical purpose. That is why some schools are considering alternative types of assessment, such as projects or coursework. Not only are these more enjoyable and less stressful, they also de-emphasise memorisation and allow students to demonstrate other skills, including creativity, independent learning and teamwork.

Another reason could be the demanding schedule that youngsters have nowadays. After a long day at school, students usually have several more hours of homework to do or extra classes in the evening, which makes them constantly exhausted. In addition, studying while you are exhausted is unproductive. Students might sit in front of a book automatically making notes but not really taking anything in, or they might work very slowly and have lapses in concentration. To tackle this problem, students should plan regular breaks and, ideally, take exercise outdoors. Although it seems illogical to suggest doing even more activity when their schedule is already full, in fact taking a break can refresh your body and mind. This will make you work faster and concentrate for longer, compared to studying while you are tired and only making slow progress.

To sum up, this problem is serious and widespread. The number of exams is one cause, and students' busy schedules are another. However, if schools can switch to alternative forms of assessment and if students can organise their schedule well, they may be able to manage the pressure better and enjoy more free time. Therefore, both schools and students ought to take action to remedy the situation.

## Top Tips for writing

- Some essay questions ask you to discuss a problem (which may involve explaining the causes of it) and suggest solutions. Look carefully at the wording of the question so you know what to write about.
- Start your essay by paraphrasing the question in your own words. Avoid copying the question. Then, complete the introduction by giving a one-sentence overview of the essay (This essay will examine ...).
- Avoid listing many different causes and solutions. It's better to discuss two or three causes and solutions and develop them with explanation and examples. Here are two possible ways to organise them.
  - Put all the causes in one paragraph and all the solutions in another.
  - Describe one cause and a related solution in each paragraph.
- Use linkers and verbs to show causes and effects.
- To suggest solutions, use conditional sentences and modal verbs.

## 1. Check your understanding: gap fill

Complete the essay structure with the content points in each paragraph.

|                            |                          |                                       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| cause of the problem (1)   | cause of the problem (2) | overview of the essay                 |
| paraphrase of the question |                          | summary of the problem and its causes |
| solution (1)               | solution (2)             | summary of the solutions              |

1. Paragraph 1: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
2. Paragraph 2: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
3. Paragraph 3: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
4. Paragraph 4: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Check your writing: gap fill

Complete the sentences with a linking phrase. There are phrases for giving a reason, result or purpose.

|                  |        |             |             |
|------------------|--------|-------------|-------------|
| which means that | Due to | so as       | This is why |
| in order to      | Since  | As a result | so that     |

1. There are extra revision sessions \_\_\_\_\_ students can get help if they need it.
2. Pollution is getting worse and worse, \_\_\_\_\_ there is a need for the government to take action and remedy the situation.
3. University fees have increased this year. \_\_\_\_\_, there are fewer students.
4. The term should be reduced by two weeks \_\_\_\_\_ allow more time for holidays.
5. Scholarships have been introduced \_\_\_\_\_ to attract more applicants.
6. There has been a lot of heavy rain this year, and more is expected. \_\_\_\_\_ the government should spend more on flood protection.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ popular demand, the train timetable will be extended.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ there is a lot of competition for university places, most students find their final exams stressful.

### 3. Check your writing: gap fill

Complete the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first. Write two or three words in each gap.

1. The council should build more cycle lanes to improve road safety.  
More cycle lanes \_\_\_\_\_ to improve road safety.
2. If we don't raise taxes, there won't be enough money for hospitals.  
\_\_\_\_\_ taxes, there won't be enough money for hospitals.
3. Building a new railway system is a possibility.  
We \_\_\_\_\_ a new railway system.
4. The government should provide theatres with subsidies.  
Theatres \_\_\_\_\_ by the government.
5. This is not an effective way to run a business.  
The business is not \_\_\_\_\_.
6. They should allocate more funding for renewable energy.  
Renewable energy \_\_\_\_\_ more funding.
7. People should be assessed in a less stressful way.  
\_\_\_\_\_ less stressful.
8. We need to use our creativity more to find solutions.  
We need to find more \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Discussion

Do you have to learn a lot of things by heart for exams? Is that a good or a bad thing?

Do you have enough leisure time?