

Writing Your Essay

An Essay is a piece of writing on a subject that is written from the view point of the author.
Essays explore an aspect of a topic rather than complete coverage.

Choose Your Country

The first decision is to choose the Commonwealth country you would like to write about. The following questions may help you decide:

- ⇒ How much do you know about the country?
- ⇒ Have you, or do you know someone who has visited the country?
- ⇒ Has your family a connection to the country?
- ⇒ Will you be able to find enough information about the country?
- ⇒ Is there a country that you have been curious about?
- ⇒ Have you a pen pal in the country?

Gather Information

Once you have decided on the country you will write about, begin to gather information. You will want to look at books, magazines, encyclopedias, articles in newspapers and online sources. You may want to interview people who have been in the country you have chosen. Your librarian will be a great help in locating information.

Take Notes

As you look at each source you will want to keep track of ideas, facts, or quotations that you would like to use in your essay. You might use your computer or index cards to keep a separate note for each source. The card should include the name of the source, the author, the date, and pages on which the information is found. Write the information in your own words. If you copy the information be sure to use quotation marks.

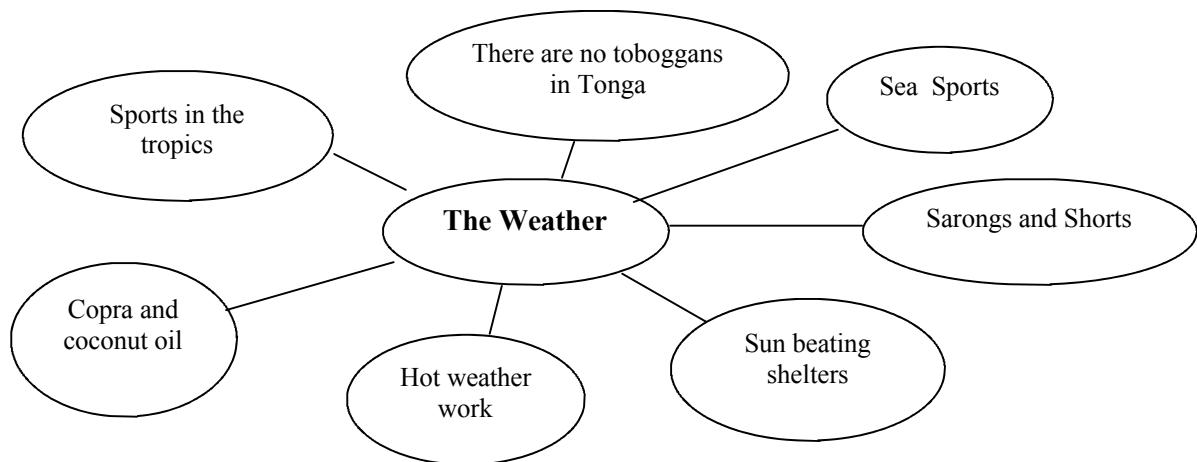
Choose a Theme

Now that you know something about the country you will want to choose a theme for your essay. Here are some theme titles used by others:

- ⇒ Australia: Sports Paradise
- ⇒ Monsoons and Markets: India
- ⇒ My Family's First Homeland: Singapore
- ⇒ Rubber Trees and Rice: Malaysia
- ⇒ Life on the Equator: Kenya

Prepare an Idea Map

In the centre of a page write your theme. Around the theme write the ideas you would like to include in your essay.



Prepare an Outline

Use your idea map to prepare an outline. Your outline should put the information in order. For example, you want to write about the weather in a country before you describe the crops grown or the clothes people wear.

When you Borrow Ideas

Using another writer's words or ideas and pretending that they are your own can get authors in serious trouble. Certainly you are allowed to use common knowledge. Common knowledge is material that is available in a number of places. For example, you may write about Malaysia as a country where a visitor may explore tropical jungles, forests and wander on sandy beaches bordered by oil palm trees. You may not however write,

“Jungle-clad mountains, dense and humid forests, vast plantations of rubber trees and oil palms and miles of golden beaches make up Malaysia.”

These words are the words used in Reader's Digest Guide to Places of the World, A Geographical Dictionary Page 408. Reader's Digest Association. 1987

Using Another Author's Words and Ideas

Often you will find writers who have used just the right words, they have written something you would like to say. You may use the words by setting them off in your paper and including them in quotation marks. For example:

“ An old school bus, its purple and pink paint job faded by the sun, caught my eye; the grass grew up around its flattened tires; a metal chimney poked out in the sky from a hole cut in its roof. All it lacked was a hand-painted sign on its side reading YUKON OR BUST ”

-Michael Kluckner. Canada, A Journey of Discovery: Vancouver Rainforest books, 1998 Page 145

Using Quantities

There will be many quantities used in the countries you read about. The area of Malaysia is 330,434 square kilometers; The population of Canada is close to 30 million people. For most readers these numbers have little meaning.

You can help the reader by linking these numbers to things they do know about. For example, Malaysia would fit into Canada 30 times. The 42,000 people who live in the Northwest Territories would all fit in the Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton and there would be room for more.

List Your References

The last page of your essay should be a list of the references that you have used.

For example:

1997. The Avalon Project; Articles of Confederation. 1781. Co-Directors William C.Fray and Lisa Sapar. 1996. Yale Law School. 2 Dec. 1977

<www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/aartconf.htm>

2000. Desk Reference Atlas, 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press

1997 “Guyana” South American Handbook. Ben Box. Chicago: Passport Books

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