

Essay checklist

Essay · Plan and draft · Handout

Use the first part before your plan meeting and the second before you upload.

Before the plan meeting

- ☐ My title is copied word for word, and I discuss exactly the areas of knowledge it names.
- ☐ I have written a working definition of the title's key term, and I can name **an example that would come out the other way** under it.
- ☐ My definition is neither easier than the title's term, nor so wide that nothing could count against my thesis, nor so strict that the answer follows from it.
- ☐ My thesis is one or two sentences and reads naturally straight after the title. It says *when* or *to what extent*, and *why*.
- ☐ My outline is a list of **positions**, not a list of examples. It is not a tally of pros and cons.
- ☐ In each area of knowledge I have a pair: a case where the method worked and one where it failed, and I can name the variable that separates them.
- ☐ I know who disagrees with me most strongly, by name, and what I will say back.

Before you upload

- ☐ There is a sentence that decides: which side wins, and why. It is not "both," "balance" or "it depends."
- ☐ Every verdict has a measure. I have circled "matters a lot," "doesn't matter," "the thesis is confirmed" and asked *by what measure?*
- ☐ The strongest opposing view is stated fairly and answered, not dismissed by a definition.
- ☐ There is a paragraph that begins *If this is right, then...*
- ☐ In each example paragraph, analysis is at least as long as narration.
- ☐ **Swap test:** each example decides something another example would not.
- ☐ Every example is real: a name, a date, a source. No flat Earth, no Galileo-versus-the-Church fairy tale.
- ☐ **Relabelling test:** no section could be renamed "technology" or "ethics" without changing a word.
- ☐ Every fact inside my key examples is checked. I write *suggests* where I cannot write *proves*.
- ☐ The introduction was written last. The conclusion answers the title in its own words and adds no new examples.
- ☐ No more than 1600 words. References are clean: no study-guide sites only, no `utm_source=` tags.
- ☐ Proofread, and every comment on my draft has been dealt with; I can point to where.