



Guidelines on Essay Writing for the FAA Exams

An Essay or assignment can have many purposes, but the basic structure is the same no matter what. There are a few simple steps involved here.

Do not let the idea of putting pen to paper daunt you. GET STARTED!

1. What is the question asking of you? Be clear on your topic!
2. Prepare an outline or diagram your ideas.
3. CHECK and recheck that the chart data is CORRECT

Strategy: Some people like to start writing right away and wait to see what develops. Others may write down many ideas until they can see something emerging. A good idea is to plan your work. The task of writing is much easier if you create a set of notes that outline the point you want to make. This helps you create a basic structure on which your ideas can be built.

Plans : Get some pieces of scrap paper – shape and re-shape your ideas before you start writing, editing and rearranging your point of view, as you give them more thought. You can do this planning on computer or on paper.

Analyse the question: Make very sure you understand what the question is asking of you. *What is its central issue?* Analyse any key terms (check word definitions in dictionary) and any instructions. If in any doubt ask your teacher or another student for feedback in what is required.

Generate Ideas: Brainstorm and assemble the ideas for your assignment. On your 1st sheet of paper make a note of anything that may be relevant to your answer. For example, on observing the Natal Chart of the person write down anything you observe first off that is relevant to the question. Put down anything that comes to mind as you observe the chart visually.

Extraction of points: On a 2nd piece of paper extract from your brainstorming on the 1st piece of paper, any points that are relevant to the question and its central issue. Discard anything that cannot be directly related to the question.

Put relevant points in order: On a 3rd piece of paper, put the chosen points into a logical sequence. For example, in observing the element balance – you may notice that the person has a lack of fire in their chart.

You note that the question relates to ‘a lack of energy or assertion’. You postulate that the lack of fire may have something to do with the question – so this is a very relevant point! At this stage you need to be formulating a basic response to the question, even if it is just provisional and will later be changed. Try to arrange the points so that they form a persuasive and coherent argument.

Arrange your evidence: All major points need to be supported by evidence in the chart – as you write down your major relevant points substantiate them with astrological evidence. For example, the person with a lack of fire who experiences an inability to express their emotions may also have Mars in Aries or in the 1st House. This needs to be written down in your assignment showing where you got your information from. You can also, on another piece of paper, compile a list of brief quotations from other astrological sources (together with page references), which will be offered as evidence for what you are saying.

Make the necessary changes: It is likely that whilst you have been engaged in the first stages of planning your assignment, new ideas have popped into your mind. Be prepared at this stage to rearrange your plan so that it incorporates any of these new ideas or insights. Try out different ways of arranging your essay topics until you are sure they form a convincing and logical sequence.

Finalise your Essay Plan: The structure of most essays can be summarised into :

- *Introduction*
- *Body (arguments or substantial evidence)*
- *Conclusion.*

Guidelines on Essay Writing in Astrology

A way to start off your assignment in the Introduction is to find a poignant quote that really gets to the nitty gritty of what the question is about. State your case briefly and concisely as possible, get to the point – present the evidence for your answer in the Body of the essay, then you can sum up and lift your argument to a higher level in your Conclusion.

Your final plan could contain a list of about 6 major points. Each one of these points will be expanded to a paragraph of approximately 100-200 words.

At all stages of your essay planning, and even when you write the assignment, you need to keep the question in mind. Keep asking yourself *'is this evidence relevant to the topic I have been asked to discuss?'* *If in doubt, be prepared to discard it and formulate new evidence. This is much easier than discarding the finished essay. At all times aim for clarity and logic in your argument or support of the question.*

- WRITE YOUR OPENING STATEMENT :
- WRITE THE BODY : Write main points; write sub points; elaborate on sub points.
- WRITE THE INTRODUCTION.
- WRITE THE CONCLUSION : The Conclusion brings closure to the examiner, summing up your points or providing a final perspective on your topic. The conclusion only needs about 3-4 strong sentences reviewing the main points in the Body.

Cite your References: If you have quoted from any astrological books – make sure you include this in a footnote at the end of each page. At the end of your assignment, write a **Bibliography of the books** you referenced so that the examiner can get an idea of how you formed your ideas. Do not overdo quotations – be discerning and make sure the quote is relevant.

****CHECK :**

1. the order of your paragraphs – look at your paragraphs – be sure that they make sense.
2. what the question is asking of you. Check & re-check!
3. your writing/spelling/grammar.

Nothing can substitute for revision of your work! By reviewing what you have written – you can edit and improve on weak points that you otherwise may have been missed.

- Read and reread your assignment answer before you print it out and copy it.
- Does your assignment make logical sense? Leave it for a few hours and then read it again. Does it still make logical sense?
- Do your sentences flow smoothly from one to another? If not, try to add some words and phrases to help connect them cohesively. Transition words such as 'therefore' or 'however' sometimes can help here. Also you might refer in one sentence to a thought in the previous sentence. This is especially useful when you move from one paragraph to another. Try and get them to flow into each other!
- Ask yourself : "Am I getting it across to the reader/examiner?" Take responsibility for critically assessing your own writing. Read and evaluate other styles of different writers – what makes them effective? Get feedback - let other people read your assignment – if it does not make sense to them – you may need to clarify your argument. If they struggle to read it, you may need to edit more carefully.
- Run 'spell check' on your computer before you print it out. Spell check can help you detect errors that you may have missed.
- The suggested length for assignments in FAA exams is different for each module. Check that you are within the prescribed word limit.

Once you have checked and rechecked your work and perfected your formatting, your assignment is complete.

Guidelines on Essay Writing in Astrology

In your written interpretations of a chart and answer to the question you are expected to show counselling ability. The examiners are looking for synthesis of the chart as a whole, clarity of expression and the ability to answer the client's question constructively and accurately.

“Counselling Orientation” (defined) excerpt from the FAA Exam Book.

Where Exam questions refer to a counseling setting this is to be defined as:

The goal is to provide insight into the potentials, challenges and nature of the client's chart whilst also providing hope and direction for future change. This may involve addressing psychological complexes, shadow issues, wounds and defenses that could be operating outside a client's current level of awareness. The goal is to empower the client to understand their experiences so as to encourage the client toward their optimal growth and development. The natal chart is a map of the psyche and as such should be approached with respect, compassion, care and patience. Remember “Do No Harm”.

Put a cover sheet on the assignment that includes your Student Number at the top and the question and its number underneath. For FAA Exams, keep each question separate and send a digital version to the Exam Board Director no later than the return date given. Also make a copy for yourself in case you want your teacher or someone of your choice to check it for you later on.

You are given 5 weeks to complete 3 essays for the Interpretation or Dynamic Module Exams. A suggestion is to attempt to do at least 300 words a day – do one question per week – 3 weeks will cover the 3 questions and then in the final two weeks – edit – check and recheck etc. the final copies, maybe have someone read through them for you, before emailing them off.

There is no one specific point in a birth chart that shows an individual's spiritual or life direction forward. You have to look at the horoscope as a whole – looking for major themes - according to various rules and principles (this is the science) – then you thread them all together like a tapestry (this is the art). Colour the canvas of your essays with positive statements that empower the client towards their future potential.

Enjoy and have fun – let your creative juices flow!