Note for teachers:

This is intended as a sorting activity. In pairs or small groups, students arrange the comments into a diamond, with the most helpful comments at the top and the least helpful or inaccurate pieces of advice at the bottom. Ideally students then look at a sample essay and assess how well it has been written. They can then apply the same strategy to their own essays.

What makes a good essay?

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| Every paragraph should be relevant to the title of the essay. | If you express an opinion about something, you should be able to back it up with evidence. | Your essay should just retell the story of whatever poem or book you have read. |
| You should give the reader no option but to believe you are right. | You shouldn’t have to prove your point. | Your introduction should relate to the essay title. |
| A good essay has a carefully considered structure. | You should skip from one topic to another in the same paragraph. | A strong conclusion makes the reader remember your essay. |
| If you use a big font it looks as if you’ve written more. | You should let all your sentences run into each other. | If you write more you get a better grade, even if your writing isn’t very good. |
| Paragraphs are not really important. | You should use linking words (connectives) to start new sentences. | You should show that you understand your subject by including terms that you have learned. |
| Varying the way you start your sentences makes them more interesting to read. | You shouldn’t bother trying new vocabulary. | It’s a good idea to imagine that the reader has a basic understanding of what you are writing about. |