

How to answer an Open Response Question

Open response questions are meant to be answered in one page. As such, your answer should be three paragraphs long, with a short introduction, a body paragraph, and a short conclusion. Even if the question looks like it can be answered in a few sentences, a longer answer that includes more explanation will be a better answer that earns more points. We are looking to see if you can correctly format an intelligent response concisely.

Read the questions or statement carefully. Open Response questions are specific. Decide what the question is asking or what the statement is stating. Look for keywords like “direction words” or verbs in the question so you know exactly what you are supposed to do. The first sentence of your response should come from the actual question or statement given. For example: if the question says, “Explain the significance of the statement...” then begin your first introductory sentence with something like this “The importance of the statement is...”

Your body paragraph is significantly longer than the first and third paragraphs. In this paragraph you are proving your thesis. Answer the question using specific information and details that prove your point. If your open response question has an attached reading passage, include quotes from that passage to support your thesis.

The conclusion paragraph is similar to your introduction. It is very short. It restates the question and sums up your main points of your argument.

Tips:

- Never use 1st person (I). For example, instead of writing “I think there is good personification in the poem”, write, “There are several powerful examples of personification in Thomas Hardy’s poem ‘Throwing a Tree’.”
- Never use 2nd person (you). For example, instead of writing, “You will find two examples of alliteration in *Tom Sawyer*”, write, “There are two examples of alliteration in *Tom Sawyer*.”
- Do not start a clincher with “in conclusion,” “all in all,” “now you know,” “thanks for reading,” or “I hope you liked my essay!”
- Use vocabulary from the excerpt. If a character is described as being cantankerous (grumpy), then you should use the same adjective when you write about the character.
- Use specific examples to support your point.
- Quotes are the best evidence. Be sure to explain the relevance of each quote and how it connects to your thesis. Be sure to use quotation marks!
- Double check your work for proper spelling and capitalization. Avoid using slang or informal language. Write words out instead of using contractions. Check for correct use of quotation marks and punctuation.