Comprehensive Essay Writing Checklist

Step 1: Before You Start Writing

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| **CHECKLIST ITEM** | **COMPLETED?****YES/NO** |
| **Do I fully understand the essay question?** |  |
| **Have I clarified any confusing instructions with my instructor?** |  |
| **Have I identified the key terms, action words (e.g., analyze, compare, evaluate), and topic?** |  |
| **Have I done background reading and gathered credible sources?** |  |
| **Have I taken clear notes, using my own words?** |  |
| **Have I created a rough outline or mind map of my main ideas?** |  |

Step 2: Planning & Research

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| **CHECKLIST ITEM** | **COMPLETED?****YES/NO** |
| **Do I have a clear thesis statement (central argument or position)?** |  |
| **Have I selected strong, relevant evidence to support my points?** |  |
| **Have I considered multiple perspectives if required?** |  |
| **Are my sources academic, reliable, and properly documented?** |  |
| **Have I organized my main points logically (e.g., chronological, thematic, comparative)?** |  |

Step 3: Writing the Introduction

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| **CHECKLIST ITEM** | **COMPLETED?****YES/NO** |
| **Have I started with a hook or engaging opening (a fact, question, or brief anecdote)?** |  |
| **Have I provided any necessary background or context?** |  |
| **Is my thesis statement clear, specific, and arguable?** |  |
| **Have I outlined the structure of the essay (brief roadmap)?** |  |

Step 4: Writing Body Paragraphs

**For** **each paragraph:**

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| **CHECKLIST ITEM** | **COMPLETED?****YES/NO** |
| **Does the paragraph begin with a clear topic sentence?** |  |
| **Is there one main idea per paragraph?** |  |
| **Have I included evidence (facts, quotes, examples, data)?** |  |
| **Have I explained how the evidence supports my argument (analysis)?** |  |
| **Have I used transitions or linking phrases to connect ideas smoothly?** |  |
| **Have I avoided overly long or repetitive paragraphs?** |  |

Step 5: Writing the Conclusion

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| **CHECKLIST ITEM** | **COMPLETED?****YES/NO** |
| **Have I restated the thesis in different words?** |  |
| **Have I summarised the key arguments without introducing new evidence?** |  |
| **Have I provided a final thought, implication, or call to action?** |  |

Step 6: Academic Writing Style

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| **CHECKLIST ITEM** | **COMPLETED?****YES/NO** |
| **Have I written in formal, academic language (avoiding slang, contractions, and conversational tone)?** |  |
| **Have I used appropriate sentence starters and transition words?** |  |
| **Have I maintained an objective, evidence-based voice (avoiding excessive “I” or personal opinions unless permitted)?** |  |
| **Have I checked for sentence variety and clarity?** |  |

Step 7: Referencing & Academic Integrity

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| **CHECKLIST ITEM** | **COMPLETED?****YES/NO** |
| **Have I cited all ideas, quotes, and data from sources?** |  |
| **Is my referencing style consistent (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)?** |  |
| **Have I included a properly formatted bibliography/reference list?** |  |
| **Have I checked for plagiarism using available tools?** |  |

Step 8: Editing & Proofreading

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| **CHECKLIST ITEM** | **COMPLETED?****YES/NO** |
| **Have I checked for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors?** |  |
| **Have I read the essay out loud to catch awkward phrasing or unclear sentences?** |  |
| **Have I ensured each paragraph links back to the thesis?** |  |
| **Have I verified that I met the word count requirements?** |  |
| **Have I checked formatting (font, spacing, margins) as per guidelines?** |  |