

How to write a Philosophy Essay for the IPO contest



WRITING

Generally speaking, when you write, it is appropriate to define in advance:

- **Aim**
- **Recipient**
- **Suitable type of text**
- **Syntactic and formal rules**



- **Why?**
- **To whom?**
- **What?**
- **How?**

➤ AIM

(Why?)

- A philosophical essay should be an **exploratory device**, something that **starts with a question** and takes you on a path towards an answer.
- Any philosophical inquiry **wants to persuade** a listener or reader to accept one's thesis through honest, logical, and thorough argumentation.

SO

Your chief **task** and challenge at the IPO is to **write** a **persuasive essay** that responds to one of four philosophical topics.



➤ Recipient (to Whom?)

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Who will listen to you or read your writing.

Your audience (Philosophy teachers from more than 50 countries).



➤ Suitable type of text (What?)

YOU SHOULD WRITE

a **well-reasoned**, well-argued essay presented in a **logical** but concise structure.



➤ Syntactic and formal rules (How?)

YOU SHOULD WRITE

a philosophy essay in **clear**,
concise, critical, and
convincing language.



➤ IPO Statements

- IPO statements are usually statements that may be true or false but are **at the least provocative**.

IPO statements want to elicit a reaction.

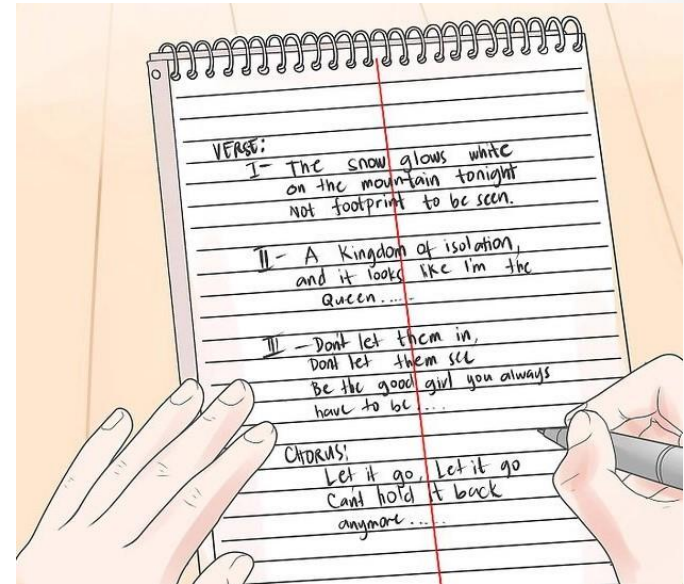
Be definitive!

Be courageous! Take a stand.

IPO judges want to know *your* opinion.

Write your essay in 8 steps

- 1. Know your audience
- 2. Organize your thoughts
- 3. Structure your essay
- 4. Write your introduction
- 5. Argue your position
- 6. Consider counter-arguments
- 7. Craft a conclusion
- 8. Revise, edit and rework your essay



1. Know your audience

- IPO judges are predominantly **teachers or practitioners of philosophy** from all over the world.
- IPO judges do not evaluate your essay based on **their own agreement** or disagreement with your thesis and arguments;
- IPO judges are more interested in the methodology you use to build your case, how well you understand the topic, and the **coherence, originality** and **persuasive power** of your argument.

2. Organize your thoughts

- One of the best ways to organize your thoughts is to create an **outline summarizing** your response to the topic.
- The outline
 1. will help you in your argumentation
 2. will help the reader to understand your writing
 3. will help you to discover any missing elements
- Remember that the IPO requires you to complete your essay in four hours, so you will not have time to outline your thoughts in great depth.

2. Organize your thoughts

- 1. **Introduction**—draft your position in response to the topic (thesis statement).
- 2. **Analysis**—summarize your assessment of the main points of the topic.
- 3. **Arguments**—bulletize the main arguments you intend to make in support of your position.
- 4. **Counter-arguments**—note briefly at least one possible major response to your argument.
- 5. **Summary**—summarize your main position in response to the topic.

3. Structure your essay

A clear and logical structure in a philosophy essay can look like the following one

1. Introduction

- a. State your thesis
- b. Analyze and react to the topic
- c. Mention briefly the main arguments you intend to make
- d. Explain any technical or philosophical terms (if relevant)

2. First Argument

- a. Reason your position with details
- b. Provide evidence, examples, etc. supporting your reasoning

3. Counter Argument

- a. Discuss/acknowledge possible objections to your arguments
- b. State your reasons for your considering and rejecting

4. Second Argument

- a. Reason your position with details
- b. Provide evidence, examples, etc supporting your reasoning

5. Counter Argument

- a. Discuss/acknowledge possible objections to your arguments
- b. State your reasons for your considering and rejecting

6. Third Argument (optional)

- a. Reason your position with details
- b. Provide evidence, examples, etc. supporting your reasoning

7. Counter Argument (optional)

- a. Discuss/acknowledge possible objections to your arguments
- b. State your reasons for your considering and rejecting

8. Closing Paragraph

- a. Restate your thesis
- b. Flesh out any key points again
- c. Discuss briefly the key implications of your argument (if relevant)

3. Structure your essay

Prepare the reader. Make it obvious from the start what your thesis is and how you will proceed with explaining and defending it. This will prepare and guide the judges for what your argument is.

***As the topic is** very comprehensive it must be broke down in smaller parts:*

***First I will discuss** the topic.....*

***Secondly, I will** go a step even further and argue for the*

***Finally,** using a dialectical attitude, **I seek to**
.....*

4. Write your introduction

- ✓ Your introduction should contain your analysis of the topic, i.e., your reaction to, or opinion of, the philosophical topic.
- ✓ You need to provide the essence of your thesis you will defend throughout the rest of your essay.
- ✓ It is useful to indicate the basic structure of your essay
- ✓ In the introduction explain any technical terms or definitions you intend to use in support of your thesis and how they relate to your argument.

5. Argue your position

- Your argument is the most critical part of your essay. IPO judges will **determine from this section** how well you understand the subject, how coherently, thoroughly, and concisely you make your points.
- *An argument is a set of premises or reasons that are presented as support or grounds for believing a conclusion.*
- What assumptions is the author or the statement making? What is the intent of the author or the statement? What implications does the statement have?

5. Argue your position

1. Does the topic statement rest on false, unjustified or weak assumptions?
2. Does the topic statement have any internal contradictions?
3. Are the topic statement's conclusions faulty?
4. Do the topic statement conclusions lead to unintended consequences that are detrimental to a group or class of people, to society, or to humanity in general?

Keep in mind that you are **defending your opinion** on the given topic; you are **not presenting a new philosophical theory** in your essay.

6. Consider counter-arguments

- To create a well-rounded philosophical essay you should **anticipate objections** to your thesis and arguments.
- Be sure to present and **analyze these opposing views**.
- When you present an opposing view, step through your **reasons for rejecting it**.
- There are always **two sides to an argument**. Sometimes but rarely are both equally valid.
- You **need to weigh** in with your opinion as to which argument you think is **more valid** and present reasons why.

7. Craft a conclusion

- The purpose of your conclusion is to **restate your thesis** and **summarize your arguments** in concise terms.
- It should **not be a copy** of your introduction.
- Revisit your main points in summary form, and **emphasize the arguments** you feel most strongly will convince the judges that you have defended your opinion on the topic.
- The concluding paragraph is also the place where you want to **highlight any outstanding or important implications** or limitations to your argument.

8. Revise, edit and rework your essay

- During the IPO essay contest, you **won't have time** to do extensive rewriting.
- However, if possible, try to budget at least 20 minutes at the end of the allotted **four hours** to review what you have written.



Other warnings

1. Choose your topic

(Ethics, Knowledge, Politics, Religion, Art)

2. Memorize chunk expressions

(I would like to, I will argue, etc.)

3. Use questions

(What...? How...? Why..? What if..?)

4. Use personal quotations

(lyrics, songs, films, literature)