

NEWNHAM COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

# HINTS AND TIPS FOR ASPIRING ESSAYISTS

NEWNHAM COLLEGE ESSAY PRIZE 2022

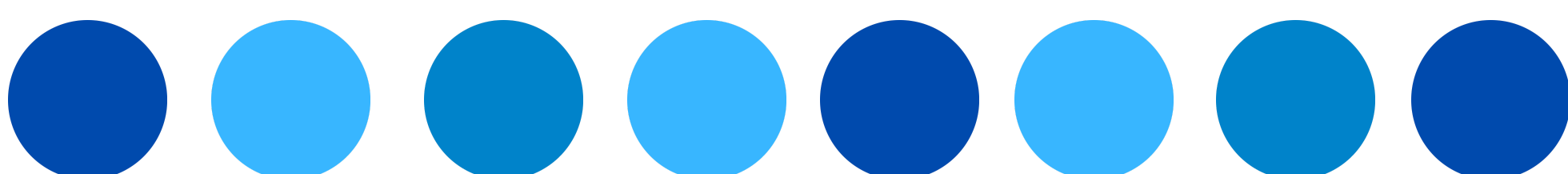
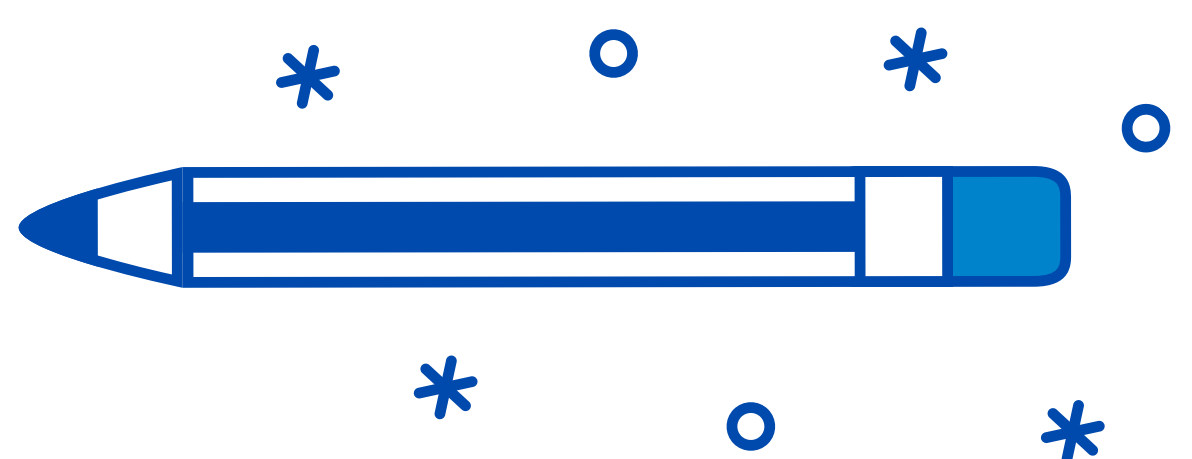
Written by Newnham  
College Staff and Students

# Introduction

"Essay prizes like Newnham's can be a fantastic way of exploring your subject outside of the school curriculum; they offer the chance to show your thinking without strictly defined assessment objectives and will hopefully make you think about some unfamiliar ideas and topics. Don't be afraid to give these a go - even if you don't win or get highly placed, these still offer a valuable academic experience which will offer some insight into the field you might want to study longer term. And you never know - your approach might be the one that stands out!"



**Dr Sam Lucy,  
Director of Admissions**



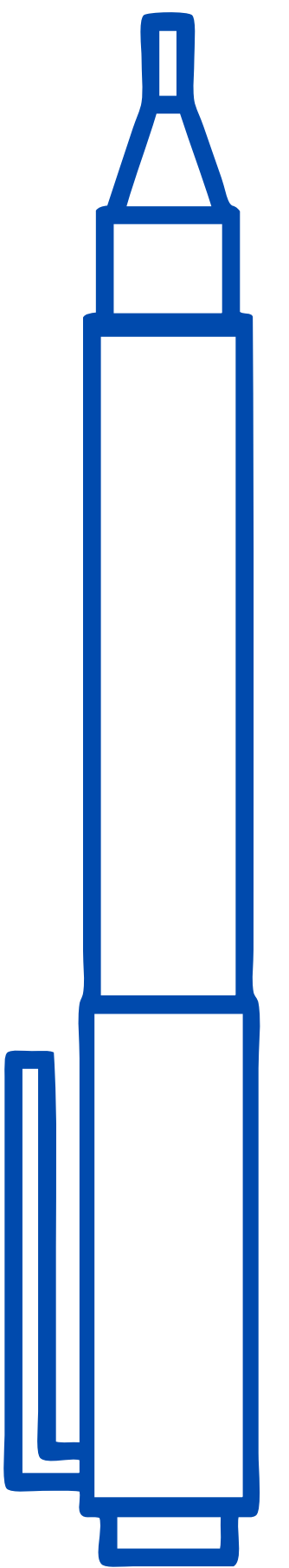
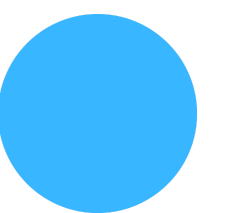
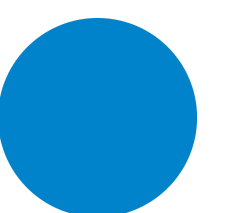
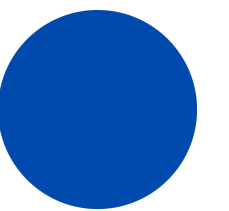
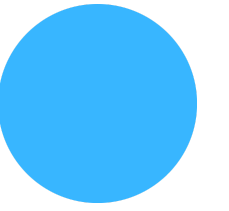
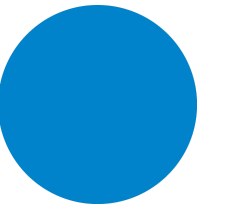
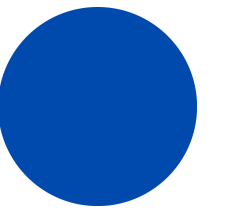
# Overview

Writing a response to one of the Newnham College Essay Prize questions may seem daunting at first, and feel a little different to your usual A-Level or sixth-form work. While we don't use 'assessment objectives' or rigid criteria for marking, we hope that this gives you the freedom to write about the topics that most interest you!

## What are we looking for?

- a logical argument
- originality
- clarity of thought
- evidence of reading beyond the school curriculum
- a response that does not solely rely on evidence from online texts and articles

Aisling Gilgeours,  
Schools Liaison and Outreach Officer





# HINTS AND TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS:

"Remember to unpick the question you are answering in your introduction. Ask yourself, why is this question being asked? What do the terms in the question mean? Does the question assume a relationship or connection, and how should I question or address this? This will help to streamline the rest of your essay."

**Nabiha Ahmed, English, 2nd Year**



"I entered the Modern and Medieval Languages Essay Prize in 2020 and found it a great introduction to the kind of work I'm now doing at Newnham. My (perhaps unconventional) advice is not to worry about writing the essay in order or sticking too strictly to an essay plan... don't be afraid to start writing the middle paragraphs first and let the essay writing process lead you to things you hadn't considered before. There'll be time to redraft and write an introduction and conclusion that reflect the direction your essay ends up taking!"

**Sophie Wrigglesworth, Modern and Medieval Languages, 1st Year**





# HINTS AND TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS:

"Remember clarity is key! When I entered this essay competition a couple of years ago, my essay was way more complicated and convoluted than needed. I know it would have been far better if I didn't get hung up on trying to 'sound smart'. Keep it simple and clear – I promise you will go far!"

**Aamina Iqbal, Human Social and Political Sciences, 1st Year**



"Choose a topic you enjoy learning about and absorb as much material as you can, for music essays this includes listening! Use this to form your own opinion and ensure your train of thought runs clearly throughout your essay. I often find it useful to make a detailed plan to not stray too far from my argument, which then makes the writing part easier."

**Beth Norman, Music, 1st Year**



# HINTS AND TIPS FROM PREVIOUS STUDENTS:

"Take some time to make your writing environment nice! Sit somewhere comfy, play some music to get you in the writing mood... it'll make the process so much more enjoyable."

**Lizzie Bowes, English, Graduated**



"A good way to add depth to your essay is to think hard about what you have read and researched. If you can analyse and paraphrase something that has been discussed in an article or paper, it shows that you have really understood the topic. Remember that research findings can sometimes be hypotheses based on evidence, rather than absolute conclusions."

**Sophie Baldwin, Natural Sciences,  
Graduated**

# tick a task!



...made my writing environment nice and comfy ☐

...chosen a question ☐

...read into the topic ☐

...bullet-pointed the key or common themes ☐

...highlighted any phrases I have copied verbatim (word-for-word) ☐

...created an essay plan ☐

...started my first draft ☐

...rewarded myself for starting my first draft ☐



# tick a task!



...updated my essay plan ☐

...completed my first draft ☐

...taken a break from writing ☐

...re-visited and re-drafted my essay ☐

...chosen an appropriate referencing style ☐

...swapped essays with a friend or asked a teacher for feedback ☐

...checked my spelling and grammar ☐

...completed a bibliography ☐





# tick a task!



...chosen a suitable font and set the font to size 11 or 12 ☐

...re-read my final draft and asked myself 'have I answered the question?' ☐

...kept within the word limit ☐

...saved my essay as a .pdf file ☐

...double (and triple!) checked my spelling and grammar ☐

...submitted my essay on the Newnham College website by the deadline ☐

...noted what I have learnt and enjoyed (for my personal statement) ☐



# Essay Submission Deadline



12pm (midday) Friday 11th  
March 2022