Essay Guidelines

The following guidelines are provided to help you develop your essay to optimize your grade.

**Essays:** Each essay should have at least 4 paragraphs (but for a good essay, it will be at least 5 or 6).
- Introduction
- Overview – Summary (generally 2 or 3 paragraphs)
  - Use a clear organizational strategy, i.e., chronological, order of importance, most to least obvious, simple to complex, concrete to abstract.
  - Note: This can make the difference of one letter grade
- Opinion (generally 2 or 3 paragraphs)
- Conclusion

**Paragraphs:**
- A well formed paragraph has a topic sentence followed by several sentences that develop that one topic specifically. If the topic or idea changes, begin a new paragraph.
- A paragraph does not have to be any specific length, but should develop one and only one topic.
- The introduction paragraph will give a brief introduction and/or overview stating the topic of the essay and giving a summary of what the content of the remainder of the essay will include.
- The conclusion paragraph should summarize and/or end the essay in a nice way so that the reader is not left “hanging”.

**Sentences:**
- A strong sentence avoids phrases like
  - There is, There are, There seems, ...
  - It is, It appears, It would seem,
  - An example of this
  - The fact that
  - Thing(s)
- A good sentence has three parts: a real subject, a strong verb and a third part which transitions to the next sentence to give the essay a good flow.

Examples:

Instead of “It appears that the synthetic material is better than the natural.”
Write “Synthetic material / surpasses / natural.”
Note: Make the subject the subject and use a strong verb.

Sentences showing transitions:
“The shift from language to symbols / freed / mathematicians from the constraints of natural language. Words / gave way to/ the four major signs. These signs and others... “

**Words:**
- Avoid the use of personal pronouns (I, me). They should only be used in the opinion section.
- Instead of using first, second, another, also, and in addition use words like consequently, therefore, thus, hence, rather, likewise, and yet.