

Academic English UK

An Introduction to SPSE



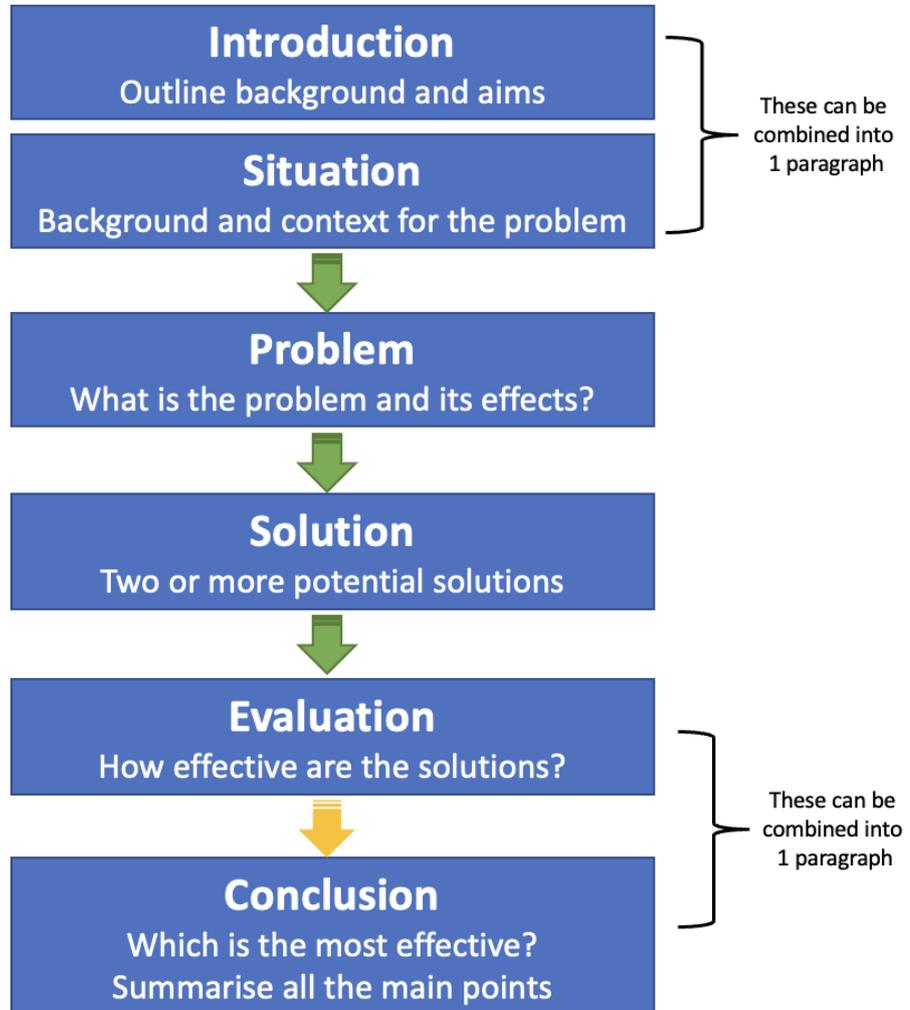
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SPSE Essays

What is an SPSE essay?

SPSE (situation, problem, solution, evaluation) essays are a common writing structure used at university. The aim of the S-P-S-E essay is to examine a problem and discuss two (or more) possible solutions. You will end with a judgement evaluating the effectiveness of these solutions.

SPSE Structure



Essay Structures

There are a variety of ways to structure the paragraphs of a SPSE essay and it depends on the topic and a student's personal preference. It is quite common to combine the introduction with the situation and the evaluation with the conclusion. These structures below are all acceptable with the **conclusion** paragraph as optional for structures 1-3:

Paragraph	Structure 1	Structure 2	Structure 3	Structure 4
1	S	S	S	S
2	P	P+S	P	P+S+E
3	S	P+S	S+E	P+S+E
4	E	E	S+E	C
5	C	C	C	

Problems

Practice

Look at these problems and decide what would be the best solutions. Then think about the positives and negatives of each solution to decide which one would be best.

Problem 1

Situation & problem: *You've been invited to your best friend's wedding and Grandma's eightieth birthday party on the same day. Your best friend's wedding is 500 miles (800 Km) from your grandma's party. What will you do?*

Solution *(Think of two solutions)*

1	
2	

Evaluation *(How effective are these solutions? What are the positives and negatives?)*

	Positives	Negatives
Solution 1		
Solution 2		

Conclusion *(Which solution will you choose?)*

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Problem 2

Situation & problem: *One of your friends is really lazy and doesn't study for any of their classes. They are always playing computer games and hanging out with their friends. They told you that they are paying an online company to write all their essays and do their homework. They are even thinking about paying someone to do their final exams for them. What will you do?*

Solution *(Think of two solutions)*

1	
2	

Evaluation *(How effective are these solutions? What are the positives and negatives?)*

	Positives	Negatives
Solution 1		
Solution 2		

Conclusion *(Which solution will you choose?)*

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Obesity

Read this text on obesity & highlight the **situation**, **problems**, **solutions**, **evaluation** and **conclusion**

Consumption of processed and convenience food and our dependence on the car have led to an increase in obesity and reduction in the fitness level of the adult population. In some countries, especially industrialized ones, the number of obese people can amount to one third of the population (WHO, 2015). This is significant as obesity and poor fitness lead to a decrease in life expectancy, and it is therefore important for individuals and governments to work together to tackle this issue and improve their citizens' overall health.

Obesity and poor fitness decrease life expectancy. Overweight people are more likely to have serious illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease, which can result in premature death (Wilson, 2014). It is well known that regular exercise can reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, which means that those with poor fitness levels are at an increased risk of suffering from those problems.

Changes by individuals to their diet and their physical activity can increase life expectancy. There is a reliance today on the consumption of processed foods, which have a high fat and sugar content. According to Peterson (2013), in preparing their own food and consuming more fruit and vegetables, people could ensure that their diets are healthier and more balanced, which could lead to a reduction in obesity levels. However, organising such a change in diet and a reduction of food would need to be controlled by a dietician, which would incur further costs. In order to improve fitness levels, people could choose to walk or cycle to work or to the shops rather than taking the car. They could also choose to walk upstairs instead of taking the lift. These simple changes could lead to a significant improvement in fitness levels.

Governments could also implement initiatives to improve their citizens' eating and exercise habits. Jones (2011) argues that this could be done through education by making changes to the curriculum to incorporate diet & lifestyle. This could be implemented in high school and could have a preventative effect on the younger generations rather than a cure for the obese older generation. Governments could also do more to encourage their citizens to walk or cycle instead of taking the car, for instance by building more cycle lanes or increasing vehicle taxes. While some might argue that increased taxes are a negative way to solve the problem, Wilson (2014) highlights that it would not be any different from the high taxes imposed on cigarettes to reduce cigarette consumption.

In short, obesity and poor fitness are a significant problem in modern life, leading to lower life expectancy. Individuals and governments can work together to tackle this problem and so improve diet and fitness. Of the solutions suggested, those made by individuals themselves are likely to have more impact, though it is clear that a concerted effort with the government is essential for success. With obesity levels in industrialized and industrializing countries continuing to rise, it is imperative that we take action now to deal with this problem.

References

- Jones, J. (2011) Educate for obesity. *The Educationalist Journal* 8 (4). pp34-56
Peterson, R, J. (2013) Healthier eating creates a healthier world. *The New Scientist*.76 (6).
Wilson, C. (2014) Diseases connected to Obesity. *Medical Journal*. 55 (5). Pp23-56
World Health Organization (WHO) (2015) *Obesity the epidemic*. [online] Available at: http://www.WHO.uk/obesity_guidelines [Accessed 10 October 2020].

**Answers on last page.*

SPSE Outline Plan

The obesity essay follows structure 3 (S-P-SE-SE-C). Fill in the outline with the key points from the obesity essay. Only use bullet points and key points NOT full sentences.

Situation	
Problems	
Solutions	Evaluation
Solutions	Evaluation
Conclusion	

**Answers on last page.*

SPSE Language Phrases

Situation

Follows the conventions of an introduction

(general > specific > definition > situation > outline)

Outline: This essay will discuss two problems, propose possible solutions and evaluate the effectiveness of these solutions.

Problems

Adjective: *central / main / major / common / immediate / serious / significant.*

Verbs: *associate / raise / consider / discuss / address / resolve / discuss.*

- *The most significant problem is...*
- *... poses / presents an immediate problem because...*
- *Another possible issue is ...*

Cause & effect language

Leads to / results in / gives rise to / as a consequence / owing to / because of / as a result.

Cause and effect phrases

This suggests / ... is linked to / associated with / connected to / ... may be affected by...

Solution

Adjective: *long-term / short-term / proposed / effective / comprehensive / possible / practical / feasible / cost-effective / workable / realistic.*

Verbs: *propose / put forward / suggest / adopt / provide.*

- *One possible solution would be to.... / One way of solving the problem is...*
- *One practical approach could be to...*

Evaluation [Show both positive effects and negatives]

- *Implementation of these solutions would ... However, ...*
- *Although these solutions provide..., there are a number of limitations. The first one is...*
- *Overall, these solutions offer a range of ..., but it needs to be highlighted that...*

Conclusion [Make a decision]

In conclusion / to sum up / to conclude.

If clause: if these solutions are implemented, then this would ...

Practice

Research another societal problem (smoking, sugar tax, diabetes, traffic congestion, knife crime, etc...), complete an SPSE outline (change to a suitable structure) and then write an essay.

Topic:

Situation

Problems

Solutions

Evaluation

Conclusion

Obesity **ANSWERS**

Situation / **Problems** / **Solutions** / **Evaluation** / **Conclusion**

Consumption of processed and convenience foods and our dependence on **the car** have led to an **increase in obesity** and reduction in the fitness level of the adult population. In some countries, especially industrialized ones, **the number of obese people can amount to one third of the population** (WHO, 2015). This is significant as obesity and poor fitness lead to a **decrease in life expectancy**, and it is therefore important for individuals and governments to work together to tackle this issue and improve their citizens' overall health.

Obesity and poor fitness decrease life expectancy. Overweight people are more likely to have **serious illnesses** such as **diabetes and heart disease**, which can result in **premature death** (Wilson, 2014). It is well known that regular exercise can reduce the risk **of heart disease and stroke**, which means that those with **poor fitness levels** are at an increased risk of suffering from those problems.

Changes by individuals **to their diet** and their **physical activity** can increase life expectancy. There is a reliance today on the consumption of processed foods, which have **a high fat and sugar content**. According to Peterson (2013), **in preparing their own food, and consuming more fruit and vegetables**, people could ensure that their diets are healthier and more balanced, which could lead to a reduction in obesity levels. However, **organising such a change in diet and a reduction of food would need to be controlled by a dietician, which would incur further costs**. In order to improve fitness levels, people could choose to walk or cycle to work or to the shops rather than taking the car. They could also choose to walk upstairs instead of taking the lift. **These simple changes could lead to a significant improvement in fitness levels.**

Governments could also implement initiatives to improve their citizens' eating and exercise habits. Jones (2011) argues that this could be done through education by making changes to the curriculum to incorporate diet & lifestyle. **This could be implemented in high school and could have a preventative effect on the younger generations rather than a cure for the obese older generation.** Governments could also do more to encourage their citizens to walk or cycle instead of taking the car, for instance by building more cycle lanes or increasing vehicle taxes. **While some might argue that increased taxes are a negative way to solve the problem,** Wilson (2014) highlights that it would not be any different from the high taxes imposed on cigarettes to reduce cigarette consumption.

In short, obesity and poor fitness are a significant problem in modern life, leading to lower life expectancy. Individuals and governments can work together to tackle this problem and so improve diet and fitness. Of the solutions suggested, **those made by individuals themselves are likely to have more impact,** though it is clear that a concerted effort with the government is essential for success. **With obesity levels in industrialized and industrializing countries continuing to rise, it is imperative that we take action now to deal with this problem.**

SPSE Outline Plan **ANSWERS**

<p>Situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption (processed & convenience food) & dependence on car = obesity. • Some countries 1/3 population obese (WHO, 2015). • Obesity + poor fitness = decrease of life expectancy. • Individuals + Gov. work together = improve diet + fitness. 	
<p>Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obesity + poor fitness < life expectancy. • Illnesses = diabetes + heart disease (Wilson, 2013). • No regular exercise = heart disease + stroke • = increase suffering. • Processed foods = high fat + sugar content. 	
<p>Solutions</p> <p><u>Diet</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing own food (fruit & veg) = healthier balanced = reduction of obesity (Peterson, 2013). <p><u>Fitness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk, cycle to work / shops. • Walk upstairs – no lift. 	<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of diet needs dietician control = further costs. • Significant improvement in fitness.
<p>Solutions</p> <p><u>Government initiatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve eating + exercise. • Education = classes on healthy diet + lifestyle (Jones, 2011). • Gov - encourage walk / cycle schemes = cycle lanes + higher vehicle tax. 	<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented in high school – preventative measure for younger generations. • Not a cure for obese generation. • Tax is a negative way to solve the problem. • BUT no different than smoking (Wilson, 2014).
<p>Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant problem = lower life expectancy. • Ind. & Gov. work together to improve diet & fitness. • Best solution = individual decisions = more impact. • BUT needs Gov. to be successful. • Important to take action NOW. 	