



## Writing the MCAT Essay

Once you read a couple of sample MCAT questions, you will realise that they all sound remarkably alike; each question will provide you with a statement or thesis, such as the following:

Consider statement A: “In the recording of history, it is impossible to be objective.”

A response to this should be comprised of three components:

- ▶ **Introduction / Explanation:** Briefly discuss the above statement; explain what you think the statement means. In order to do this, you’ll have to be able to understand the terms or concepts that the statement evokes (history, objectivity, subjectivity). What makes a historical account objective? What makes it subjective? What does “the recording of history” mean – does the phrase refer to history textbooks, works of non-fiction about major historical events, memoirs: Is there a difference between ‘official’ and non-official history?
- ▶ **Antithesis:** Provide a specific situation in which the statement given to you is NOT true (Not A). In other words, give evidence of a situation in which you think it *is* possible to record an event objectively.
- ▶ **Synthesis:** This last step is where you unify your argument by explaining what you think determines when A is true and when Not A is true. When is it possible to record history objectively, and why? What might it be impossible? What factors determine this possibility or impossibility? Give examples.

The best answer will be:

- ▶ **Specific:** A good answer won’t be limited to generalizations that keep getting repeated without proof. A good argument will support itself using timely, relevant and concrete evidence.
- ▶ **Sufficiently developed:** This will give your marker a sense of your writing ability, and your ability to form and argument. You have half an hour to write the essay. In order to write as much as possible in this time period, you should be used to writing under timed conditions. Therefore, you should develop a writing strategy that you can apply to any of these questions.

- ▶ **Cohesive:** Your essay must have transitions that flow smoothly between paragraphs. Use linking words that show logical shifts in your argument, such as: first, next, finally, however, and therefore.
- ▶ **Error-Free:** Try too keep your essay as free from mechanical and stylistic errors as possible.