



Problem-solution essay



Problem-solution essays are a common essay type. The PPP gives information on what they are, how to structure this type of essay, and gives an example problem-solution essay on the topic of obesity and fitness levels.



What are problem-solution essays?

Problem-solution essays consider the problems of a particular situation, and give solutions to those problems. They are in some ways similar to [cause and effect essays](#), especially in terms of [structure](#) (see below). Problem-solution essays are actually a sub-type of another type of essay, which has the following four components:

- Situation
- Problem
- Solution
- Evaluation

The 'situation' may be included in the essay prompt, in which case it will not be needed in the main body. If it is needed, it can often be included in the introduction, especially for short essays, as with [the example essay below](#). The 'evaluation' may be included as part of the conclusion (also as in the example below), or omitted altogether, especially for short essays. For these reasons, problem-solution essays are more common than situation-problem-solution-evaluation essays (or SPSE essays)

Structure

There are two main ways to structure a problem-solution essay. These are similar to the ways to structure cause and effect essays, namely using a *block* or a *chain* structure. For the *block* structure, all of the problems are listed first, and all of the solutions are listed afterwards. For the *chain* structure, each problem is followed immediately by the solution to that problem. Both types of structure have their merits. The former is generally clearer, especially for shorter essays, while the latter ensures that any solutions you present relate directly to the problems you have given.

The two types of structure, *block* and *chain*, are shown in the diagram below. This is for a short essay, which includes the 'situation' in the introduction and 'evaluation' in the conclusion.

Block

Introduction
(including 'situation')

Problem 1

Problem 2

...

Transition sentence/paragraph

Solution 1

Solution 2

...

Conclusion
(including 'evaluation')

Chain or Point by point

Introduction
(including 'situation')

Problem 1

&

Solution to Problem 1

Problem 2

&

Solution to Problem 2

Problem 3

&

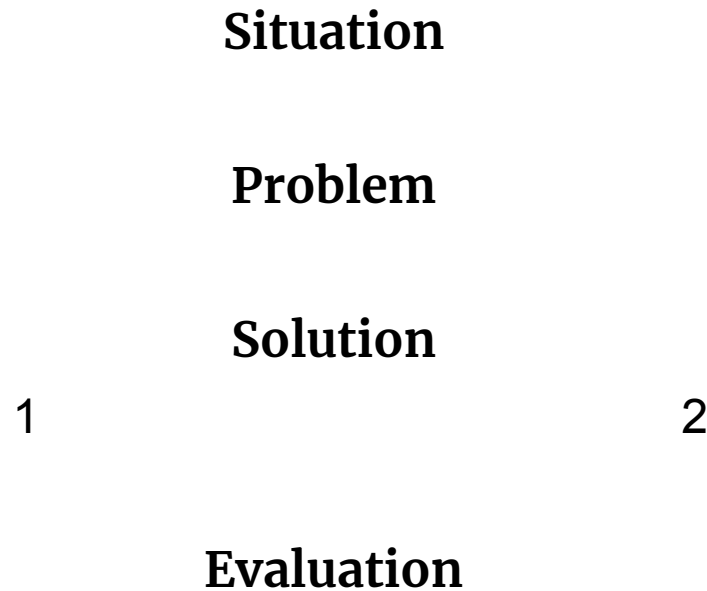
Solution to Problem 3

...

Conclusion
(including 'evaluation')

Example essay

Below is a problem–solution essay on the topic of *obesity and poor fitness*. It uses the block structure.



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. 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' diet and fitness.

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. 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. By preparing their own foods, 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. 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 up stairs 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. This could be done through education, for example by adding classes to the curriculum about healthy diet and lifestyles. 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, it is no 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 essential that we take action now to deal with this

Below is a checklist for the main body of an essay. Use it to check your own writing, or get a peer (another student) to help you.

Item	OK?	Comment
The essay is a <u>problem-solution</u> essay		
An appropriate <u>structure</u> is used, either <u>block</u> or <u>chain</u>		
The essay has a clear <u>thesis statement</u>		
Each paragraph has a clear <u>topic sentence</u>		
The essay has strong support (facts, reasons, examples, etc.)		
The conclusion includes a <u>summary</u> of the main points		