HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

The key to a good essay is organisation. Paragraphs in an essay should follow a logical sequence so that they create a line of argument. The main idea of the essay together with the main points contained in each paragraph of the body of the essay develop the line of argument. It is then summarised in the essay’s conclusion.

The structure of an essay (adapted from Schill, J. 1996, On Purpose, Heinemann, Australia. pp 118 - 12)

- The **Introduction** contains the main idea of the whole essay.
- The **Body** consists of paragraphs which develop an aspect of the main idea, each developing paragraph of the body will make a separate but slightly different point which is related to the main idea of the essay.
- The **Conclusion** will sum up the idea of the essay without adding any new information.

Identify the essay topic

The most important thing is to address the topic. If your question has been given to you, read it very carefully and make sure your essay responds directly to it.

Examine the “keywords” your question contains.

- **Evaluate:** You need to discuss a topic and reach a conclusion. You are being asked to judge a subject’s merits and put forward your opinion.

- **Discuss:** You need to present different research about your topic, describing in some detail the arguments for and against the research.

- **Compare and contrast:** You need to look for similarities and differences between concepts or theories. You do not have to state your personal views, but you should come to a conclusion based on the research.

- **Review:** You need to report widely on the subject, covering as much of the research as you can. You should examine past research, pointing out poor arguments or strengths of the works you are reviewing.
How to write each section of the essay

The Introduction

- Base it on an analysis of the question posed.
- Present the main idea of your essay in general terms.
- State the main thesis or argument of the essay very clearly. Define any difficult terms.
- Outline the major subject areas under which your arguments and supporting evidence are to appear.
- Use the language and key words of the essay question to organise your essay.
- In a short essay, the introduction will be only one paragraph.

The Body

- Develop your line of argument.
- Give relevant evidence for your main points.
- Discuss each main point in a separate paragraph, and support each main point with evidence (eg. quotations from authorities/research, criticism of authorities/research, statistical proof, comparisons, original research, examples)
- Use the language and key words of the essay question in your topic sentences and concluding sentences to sustain your line of argument and give your essay coherence.

The Conclusion

- Summarise the main points of your argument.
- Don't add any new points of information.
- Create a lasting impression by making a prediction or stating a further implication.
- Conclude strongly.
## Essay Structure

### Diagrammatic form of a basic essay plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Opening sentence</th>
<th>Statement of main thesis</th>
<th>Outline of areas to be covered</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main Body</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject Area 1</td>
<td>Evidence I</td>
<td>Evidence II</td>
<td>Evidence III</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject Area 2</td>
<td>Evidence I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject Area 3</td>
<td>Evidence I</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>Summary of subject areas 1, 2 and 3</td>
<td>Reinforcement of main thesis</td>
<td>Final sentence</td>
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