

3. STRUCTURE OF AN ESSAY

At the university, it's not enough just to write strong essays. One of the most important skills to develop is writing strong essays efficiently. And the foundation of that skill is knowing how to structure an essay. With a template for the basic essay structure in hand, you can focus on what really matters when you're writing essays: your arguments and the evidence you're using to support them. Take a look at the basic essay structure below and see how the parts of an essay work together to present a coherent, well-reasoned position, no matter what topic you're writing about.

Basic essay structure: the 3 main parts of an essay

Almost every single essay that's ever been written follows the same basic structure:

- Introduction
- Body paragraphs
- Conclusion

This structure has stood the test of time for one simple reason: It works. It clearly presents the writer's position, supports that position with relevant examples, and neatly ties their supporting arguments together in a way that makes their position evident. [5]

Introduction

A good introduction paragraph is an essential part of any academic essay. It sets up your argument and tells the reader what to expect.

The main goals of an introduction are to:

- ✓ Catch your reader's attention.
- ✓ Give background on your topic.
- ✓ Present your thesis statement—the central point of your essay.

A thesis statement is a sentence that sums up the central point of your paper or essay. It usually comes near the end of your introduction.

Your thesis will look a bit different depending on the type of essay you're writing. But the thesis statement should always clearly state the main idea you want to get across. Everything else in your essay should relate back to this idea. [2]

Body paragraphs

The body is the longest part of an essay. This is where you lead the reader through your ideas, elaborating arguments and evidence for your thesis. The body is always divided into paragraphs.

You can work through the body in three main stages:

- ✓ Create an outline of what you want to say and in what order.
- ✓ Write a first draft to get your main ideas down on paper.

- ✓ Write a second draft to clarify your arguments and make sure everything fits together.

Your essay's body paragraphs are where you support your thesis statement with facts and evidence. Each body paragraph should focus on one supporting argument for your thesis by discussing related data, content, or events.

If you're not sure whether you should include a specific point or detail in your body paragraphs, refer back to your thesis statement. If the detail supports your thesis, it should be in your essay. If it doesn't, leave it out. Your thesis statement is the core of your basic essay structure, so everything else in the essay needs to relate to it in some way.

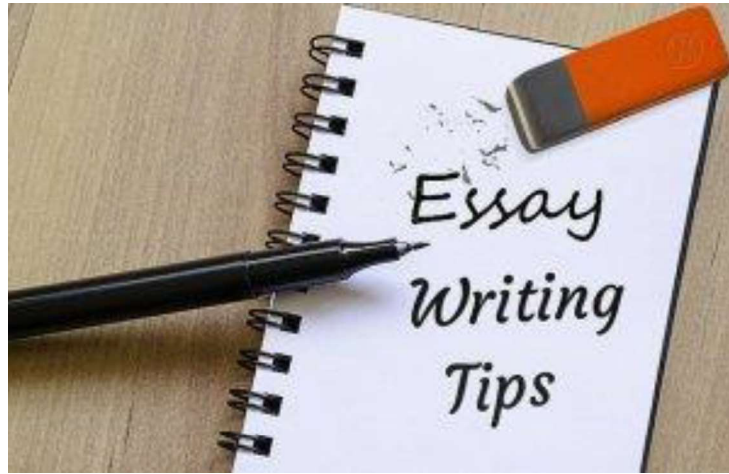
Conclusion

The conclusion is the final paragraph of your essay. In your essay's conclusion paragraph, you summarize the points you made and bring your argument to its logical conclusion. Because your reader is now familiar with your thesis, the summary in your conclusion paragraph can be more direct and conclusive than the one in your intro paragraph.

A strong conclusion aims to:

- ✓ Tie together the essay's main points
- ✓ Show why your argument matters
- ✓ Leave the reader with a strong impression

Your conclusion should give a sense of closure and completion to your argument, but also show what new questions or possibilities it has opened up.



4. TIPS FOR WRITING ESSAYS

Writing an essay can be a structured and rewarding process. Here are some helpful tips to guide you through the essay-writing process:

1. Understand the Assignment:

Carefully read and understand the assignment prompt or question. Note any specific requirements, such as length, format, and citation style.

2. Choose a Topic:

Select a topic that interests you and aligns with the assignment requirements. Ensure your topic is focused and manageable.

3. Create a Thesis Statement:

Develop a clear and concise thesis statement that presents the main idea or argument of your essay.

Your thesis should guide the reader on what to expect in the essay.

4. Outline Your Essay:

Create a structured outline with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Each section should have a clear purpose and support your thesis.

5. Introduction:

Start with an engaging hook to grab the reader's attention.

Provide background information on the topic.

Present your thesis statement at the end of the introduction.

6. Body Paragraphs:

Each paragraph should focus on a single idea that supports your thesis.

Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence, followed by supporting evidence or examples.

Ensure smooth transitions between paragraphs.

7. Use Clear and Concise Language:

Be clear and concise in your writing.

Avoid unnecessary words and ensure each sentence contributes to the overall flow of your essay.

8. Provide Evidence:

Support your arguments with relevant evidence, examples, and quotations.

Cite your sources properly according to the required citation style.

9. Stay Focused:

Stick to your main point and avoid going off-topic.

Keep each paragraph focused on a specific aspect of your argument.

10. Conclusion:

Summarize the main points made in the essay.

Restate the thesis in a different way.

End with a strong concluding statement that leaves an impression.

11. Revise and Edit:

Take time to review and revise your essay for clarity, coherence, and consistency.

Check for grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.

Consider seeking feedback from peers or instructors.

12. Proofread:

Carefully proofread your essay to catch any remaining errors.

Reading your essay aloud can help identify awkward phrasing or errors.

13. Seek Feedback:

Get feedback from others, such as peers, teachers, or writing centers.

Consider their suggestions and make necessary revisions.

14. Finalize Your Essay:

Make final adjustments based on feedback.

Ensure that your essay meets all the requirements and is properly formatted.

Remember that writing is a skill that improves with practice, so don't be discouraged if your first attempts aren't perfect. Keep refining your writing process and seeking feedback to continue improving.



USEFUL PHRASES FOR WRITING ESSAYS

Writing a well-structured essay involves using a variety of phrases to convey your ideas clearly and coherently. Here are some useful phrases for different parts of an essay:

Introduction:

"In recent years, there has been a growing interest in..."

"The issue of [topic] has become increasingly significant in today's society."

"This essay aims to explore and analyze the impact of..."

"One of the key challenges facing [subject] is..."

"It is widely acknowledged that..."

Thesis Statement:

"This essay will argue that..."

"The primary objective of this essay is to..."

"In light of the evidence, it can be concluded that..."

Body Paragraphs:

"First and foremost, it is essential to consider..."

"Moreover, it is important to highlight that..."

"A compelling argument in favor of [point] is..."

"Furthermore, when examining the data, it becomes evident that..."

"Another crucial aspect to take into account is..."

"On the contrary, some may argue that..."

"An alternative perspective on this issue is..."

Transition Phrases:

"Moving on to the next point..."

"In addition to this,..."

"Building on this idea,..."

"Similarly, it is important to address..."

"This brings us to the next aspect, which is..."

Counterargument:

"While it is true that [counterpoint], it is important to consider..."

"However, a closer examination reveals that..."

"Some may argue that [opposing view], but a more nuanced perspective suggests that..."

Conclusion:

"In conclusion, this essay has examined the impact of [topic] from various angles."

"To sum up, the evidence presented supports the idea that..."

"Ultimately, it is clear that..."

"In light of the arguments presented, one can infer that..."

General Phrases:

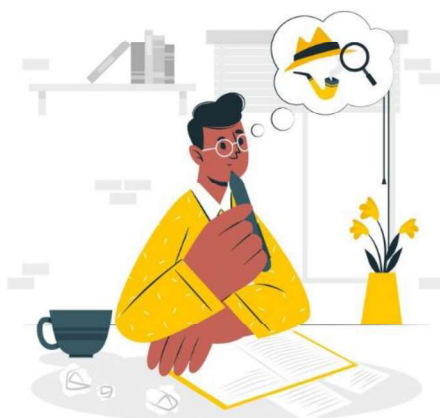
"It is worth noting that..."

"In the context of..."

"The implications of this are..."

"An essential factor to consider is..."

Remember, the key to effective essay writing is coherence, clarity, and logical progression of ideas. These phrases can help you achieve that by providing a structure to your thoughts and facilitating smooth transitions between different parts of your essay.



SENTENCE STARTERS FOR WRITING ESSAYS

Here are some sentence starters that you can use in essay writing to introduce and develop your ideas. Feel free to mix and match these sentence starters to suit the specific requirements of your essay and create a smooth flow between paragraphs.

Introduction:

In today's society, ...

As technology continues to advance, ...

In the modern era, ...

The concept of [topic] has been a subject of debate for centuries.

It is widely acknowledged that ...

Thesis Statement:

This essay aims to explore ...

The purpose of this paper is to argue ...

Through a critical analysis of ..., this essay contends that ...

In light of recent developments, it is evident that ...

Body Paragraphs:

Firstly, it is essential to consider ...

One key aspect of [topic] is ...

From a historical perspective, ...

In addition to [point], another factor to consider is ...

Furthermore, it is important to note that ...

Supporting Evidence:

For instance, ...

According to [author/expert], ...

Research conducted by [source] reveals that ...

A compelling example of this can be seen in ...

Statistics show that ...

Contrasting Ideas:

On the contrary, ...

Despite the arguments in favor of ..., there are those who argue that ...

While some believe ..., others contend that ...

It is important to acknowledge the opposing viewpoint, which suggests that ...

Concluding a Paragraph:

In conclusion, ...

To sum up, ...

As evidenced by the arguments presented, ...

This discussion highlights the significance of ...

Ultimately, ...

Transition to the Next Paragraph:

Moving on to the next aspect of [topic], ...

Shifting the focus to ...

With this in mind, ...

Having explored [previous point], let us now turn our attention to ...

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is evident that ...

This essay has demonstrated that ...

The implications of [topic] are far-reaching, as discussed throughout this paper.

As we reflect on [topic], it becomes clear that ...

In summary, the evidence suggests that ...

5. EXAMPLES

1. An example of a descriptive essay:

A Tranquil Morning by the Lake

The sun rises slowly, casting a warm glow over the tranquil lake. The water is still, like a mirror reflecting the hues of dawn – soft pinks, oranges, and purples. The air is crisp, carrying the gentle fragrance of pine trees that surround the lake.

As the first light breaks, the mist begins to lift from the water, creating an ethereal scene. The lake's surface is so calm that it seems to merge seamlessly with the sky, creating an illusion of endless space. The only disturbance is the occasional ripple caused by a gentle breeze or the graceful movements of a family of ducks gliding across the water.

The trees that line the lake stand tall and proud, their branches reaching out to touch the sky. Each leaf seems to glisten with dewdrops, adding a sparkle to the scenery. The chirping of birds creates a soothing symphony, a melody that harmonizes with the soft lapping of the water against the shore.

On the far side of the lake, a small wooden dock stretches into the water, patiently waiting for the arrival of a lone fisherman. The surrounding grass is kissed with dew, and wildflowers add splashes of color to the green canvas. A rowboat is moored nearby, its oars resting against the sides, ready for a day of quiet exploration.

The sunlight dances on the water, creating a play of shadows and reflections. Dragonflies hover above the surface, their iridescent wings catching the morning light. A sense of serenity envelops the scene, inviting anyone who witnesses it to pause and appreciate the beauty of nature.

As the morning progresses, the sun ascends higher in the sky, casting a warm embrace over everything it touches. The lake, once shrouded in dawn's quiet mystery, now sparkles in the full daylight, revealing its hidden depths and the life that teems beneath the surface.

In this tranquil morning by the lake, time seems to slow down. It's a moment frozen in beauty and serenity, inviting contemplation and gratitude for the simple wonders of the natural world.

Task 1. Complete a sample essay in your own words.

Summer Escape

My family has always looked forward to leaving Florida during _____

It is a tremendous relief to get out of the heated hustle and bustle of summer living in Florida. Each summer, we follow the _____

_____ to our hometown in upstate New York.

As we drive through state after state, it becomes apparent that the world around us is changing. In South Carolina, we already begin to notice changes. The trees appear to be _____

_____ offering soft, plush leaves which sway in the breeze, and the grass actually invites us to share _____

_____ As each state brings new surroundings, our anticipation builds, and home seems closer all the time. Leaving the flatlands and entering an area where we are suddenly surrounded by hills of purple and blue are by far the most awakening moments.

Virginia and Pennsylvania offer brilliant scenery _____

_____ and checkerboard farmlands. As we descend through the curves and winds of the northern region of the United States, home is now very close: we are almost there. Suddenly, we have driven from wide-open flatlands to a narrow, winding road surrounded by _____

_____ Around every curve, orange and black tiger lilies claim their place in the world as they push themselves out toward the car, waving hello and flashing their mysterious black spots toward us as we drive by.

The journey home is almost complete. As we begin our final descent through the state of Pennsylvania into upstate New York, the surroundings become comfortably familiar. Before long, we are welcomed by a sign that reads “Waverly, 18 miles” and the familiar fields of grazing cattle. Through the last stretch of Pennsylvania, the bursting foliage seems to envelop us and carry us over the hills like a carriage created by nature. It is at this point that our family, even the youngest member, knows that _____

_____ Our eldest son has joked for years that he can “smell” Grandma’s apple pie already. Approximately fifteen minutes pass and as our vehicle takes us over the final crest, we see the _____

_____ as we cross the border of Pennsylvania and New York and are aware of our surroundings. A couple of turns later, we are there. We have reached our destination; we are home.