

Writing an Essay – General Overview

Essays are everywhere – books, magazines, newspapers and other printed material. An essay is a short collection of paragraphs that presents facts, opinions and ideas on a topic. Topics can be descriptive through to argumentative.

There are many different ways to write an essay. The method chosen is based on the topic of the essay and the kind of essay that presents the topic in the best way. The four most typical types of essays are **narrative**, **comparison**, **cause-effect** and **argumentative**. However, often a writer will use more than one method at the same time. There are several steps you need to do in order to write well:

Prepare an **outline** = this helps you to structure your ideas and ensure that your essay is well organised and easy to follow. You should then first prepare a rough draft and then the final draft.

An essay has three basic parts – **introduction**, **body** and the **conclusion**. The introduction is the first paragraph, the conclusion is the last paragraph and the body is the bit in-between!

Introduction = usually consists of three parts – the **hook**, **connecting** information and the **writing plan**. The hook is the opening statement. Just as a fisherman uses a hook to catch a fish, a writer uses a hook to catch the reader's attention. If you use it correctly the reader will want to carry on reading. Writing a good hook requires a lot of thought and practice. After the hook, the writer usually writes three to five sentences that help connect the reader and the topic. These sentences can be background information about the topic or they can be examples. Think of these as signposts that direct the reader to the correct part of the essay.

The introduction also contains the main idea of the essay and tells what the organisation of the essay will be – the writing plan. This part of the introduction is normally the last part of the introduction. It can be one or two sentences long and tells the reader what to expect.

Main **body** = made up of paragraphs that have topic sentences and supporting sentences. Every good paragraph has a topic sentence. The topic sentence tells the reader the main topic of the paragraph. The supporting sentences give examples, reasons, facts or more specific information in support of the topic sentence.

An essay usually has three to ten paragraphs. Each paragraph discusses one idea. This idea is related to the topic of the whole essay and links back to the introduction. The topic sentence is at the start of the paragraph and it tells the reader the main topic of the paragraph.

Conclusion = it is important for an essay to have a good ending. We always want to end on a high! The introduction and conclusion must share the same ideas, but not necessarily the same words. You must let the reader know this is the end! It should be marked with what is known as some kind of **transition** or **connector**. For example, in conclusion..., from the information given..., to summarise... Sometimes the first sentence in the conclusion restates back to the thesis or main idea of the essay. You must not introduce new information in the conclusion. It should simply help the reader to reconsider the main ideas that you have already given.

After you have written your essay read the introductory paragraph and the concluding paragraph. These two paragraphs should contain much of the same information without sounding exactly the same.

If you follow these guidelines and the structure below as a general rule, you will improve your essay writing technique. The structure will also help you to provide a good outline which will mean you will order your ideas and thoughts in a logical way.

Title: _____

Part 1 – Introduction

Hook: _____

Connecting
information: _____

Writing
Plan: _____

Part 2 – The Main Body

Topic
sentence: _____

Supporting
Sentences: _____

Topic
sentence: _____

Supporting
Sentences: _____

Topic
sentence: _____

Supporting
Sentences: _____

Part 3 - Conclusion

Connector: _____

Final
Review: _____

Say what you are going to say,
say it, say it again!