

Essay structure

Essay writing is an important part of assessment at university, and its purpose is to structure your ideas in such a way that it becomes easily accessible and understandable to your readers (or in your case your marker). Essay structure is therefore very important, because if you do it right, you will ‘guide’ your reader through your ideas in a logical way. There are different ways of structuring an essay, but the basic way of doing it is by providing an introduction, a series of paragraphs (the body of your essay) and a conclusion.

Writing a good introduction

The four basic functions that a good introduction performs are:

- engaging the reader’s interest
- indicating in general what the essay is about
- indicating briefly the main ideas which are dealt with in the essay
- providing a thesis statement.

Read through the introduction which follows. Think about which sentences perform which of the four functions listed above.

.....**to be inserted**

1. Write an alternative first sentence for the introduction above to engage the reader’s interest.
2. Identify what the main ideas are in this introduction.
3. Identify the thesis statement and rewrite in your own words what the main argument (which is contained in the thesis statement) of the essay will be. Does the thesis statement assert something? Does it propose a relationship between two ideas or concepts?

Writing paragraphs; structuring your main ideas

Read through the rest of the text. For each paragraph, think about what the main idea is and how it is linked to the previous and following paragraph.

.....**to be inserted**

1. Write in your own words what the main idea is for each paragraph in the text above. Is there more than one main idea? Why? Or why not?
2. How does the author link these ideas from one paragraph to the next?
3. Are the ideas isolated or do they develop the main idea which was contained in the thesis statement in the introduction? In what way?

Writing conclusions

The conclusion of an essay performs the following functions:

- restate the thesis
- recaps the most important ideas
- draws the essay to a gentle close.

Read through the following conclusion. Think about which sentences perform which of the four functions listed above.

.....**to be inserted**

1. Identify the most important ideas in the conclusion.
2. Rewrite the main conclusion in your own words. What are the similarities to the thesis statement? And what are the differences?
3. How are the main ideas (which were developed in the paragraphs in the body of the essay) incorporated into the conclusion? Are they all there?

Writing your essay outline

Based on what you've learned about essay structure above, write an outline of what your essay is going to be about. Pay careful attention to your assignment question as you do this.

.....**insert assignment question**

1. Write a thesis statement for your proposed essay.
2. Write a set of main points (no more than 4 or 5), which should correspond to each of your proposed paragraphs.
3. Write a list of references you intend to use.