

Structure your essay

The academic essay is a common assignment in university courses where you have to write about a given topic. The purpose of an essay is to answer a specific question within a given word limit.

Important!

Check your department's guidelines or assignment instructions for further guidance on writing essays.

Main features of an essay

Introduction

- The introduction marks the formal start of the essay.
- This is where you let the reader know how you are going to tackle the essay question.
- The introduction gives a little basic background about the key subject area - it often starts off broad, then gets more specific.
- Give the reader a clear rundown of your main argument, the points you are going to cover, and any techniques or methodologies or theories you'll be using.
- You will want to outline what the assignment is about and what objectives you need to meet. These objectives will help you structure the main part of your essay.
- Show the reader what you are trying to do with the essay. The main body of the essay will concentrate deeper into all of this.

Main body

- The main body will be the largest part of your essay and where you will demonstrate your knowledge.
- This knowledge comes from your own research to answer the essay question.
- This is where you break down the information you have found to answer the essay question and analyse it in your essay.
- The essay body itself is organised into paragraphs.
- When you are writing an essay, you back up your point by using paragraphs that make sense, have evidence, and flow smoothly from one to the next.
- Each paragraph should talk about a different point that helps answer the main question.
- In the essay, break down each main point by using examples from our own experiences, as well as by referencing information and theories from different scholarly sources like books, journals, websites, and lectures.
- Do not forget to back up your argument with evidence from the readings.
- Make sure you use your critical thinking skills to produce your own argument.

Conclusion

- The conclusion is the closing part of the essay where you will sum up all the main points and arguments which lead to a final statement.
- You let the reader know how the content you talked about in the main body of the essay help answer the question or back up your argument.
- The conclusion does not include any new points or information.
- Make sure to connect your conclusion back to the original essay question. This is a key way to show that you've answered it.
- Sum up your main point in a couple of sentences, but make sure to add a bit more explanation than you did in the introduction.
- Whereas your introduction goes from broad to specific information, the conclusion should go from specific back to broad.
- Talk about how the main part of your essay looks at these points to back up your argument.
- In some essays, you can also use the conclusion to suggest ideas for future research.

Bibliography

- A bibliography (or reference list) comes after the conclusion and includes all the bibliographic information about the sources you have used in the essay.
- This is where you list and acknowledge all referenced sources.
- Take time and care on this step.
- Follow your departmental/module handbook's referencing style.
- Contact your [Subject Librarian](#) for referencing advice.