

What is an essay?

An essay is a short piece of writing that is written from an author's own point of view. Ideas for the essay can be derived from general knowledge or experience of the author.

An essay can have many purposes, but the basic structure is the same no matter what. You may be writing an essay to argue for a particular point of view or to explain the steps necessary to complete a task. Either way, your essay will have the same basic format. If you follow a few simple steps, you will find that the essay almost writes itself. You will be responsible only for supplying ideas, which are the important part of the essay anyway.

Don't let the thought of putting pen to paper frightens you. Get started!

Choosing a Topic

You may have no choice as to your topic. If this is the case, you still may not be ready to jump to the next step. Think about the type of paper you are expected to produce. Should it be a general overview, or a specific analysis of the topic? If it should be an overview, then you are probably ready to move to the next step. If it should be a specific analysis, make sure your topic is fairly specific. If it is too general, you must choose a narrower subtopic to discuss.

For example, the topic "IRAQ" is a general one. If your objective is to write an overview, this topic is suitable. If your objective is to write a specific analysis, this topic is too general. You must narrow it to something like "Politics in Iraq" or "Iraq's Culture."

Once you have determined that your topic will be suitable, you can move on.

Parts of the Essay

A basic essay consists of three main parts:

1. INTRODUCTION

2. BODY PARAGRAPHS

3. CONCLUSION

1 Introduction

The introduction guides the reader into your paper by grabbing attention and introducing the topic. It should contain three elements:

- a. Hook
- b. Background Information
- c. Thesis statement

Hook

**It should grab your reader's attention.
Must transition into the paper's topic**

- 1. Quote**
- 2. Definition**
- 3. Question**

Hook: Quote

A quote is a memorable line from a famous figure in history. Make sure to include author/speaker.

Ex) Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Hook: Definition

Define a term that is closely related to your topic. Provide a definition that your audience may not know.

Ex) Webster's dictionary defines sarcasm as, "a witty remark used to convey insult."

Hook: Question

Ask a question to draw your reader into your paper.

Ex) Is it true that sometimes love is not enough to overcome difficult circumstances? In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*...

Background Information

Assume that your reader has never read the question. What does your audience need to know?

- Names

- Dates

- Quotes

- Arguments

If it is a text, then include the author, title and a brief synopsis of the story

Thesis Statements

A thesis statement is simply an argument that you are going to prove. The thesis statement will be the **LAST SENTENCE** in your **INTRODUCTION** paragraph. Your thesis statement will have two parts.

1. The first part states the topic.
2. The second part states the point of the essay.

Thesis Statements: Examples

Kenya's Culture has a rich and varied history

Building a Model Train Set takes time and patience

Public Transportation can solve some of our city's most persistent and pressing problems

2. Body Paragraphs

In a basic 5 paragraph essay, there are 3 body paragraphs that all follow the same structure; but, discuss and prove different points. Each body paragraph should discuss one of the points in your thesis. You are trying to convince the reader that your point is right. Each body paragraph needs a topic sentence, point, and proof. Be sure to use transition phrases to connect your ideas. Write a closing sentence.

Paragraph 1

- **Topic sentence 1**
- **Body sentences**
- **Concluding sentence**

Paragraph 2

- **Topic sentence 2**
- **Body sentences**
- **Concluding sentence**

Paragraph 3

- **Topic sentence 3**
- **Body sentences**
- **Concluding sentence**

Body Paragraphs \ topic sentence

A topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph is going to be about. Use it to help remind the reader what your paper is trying to prove (thesis) It should have a subject, a verb, and a controlling idea.

Body Paragraphs\ Support

You must PROVE your POINT by providing PROOFS (examples) to support your topic sentence. You must COMMENT on each PROOF to further your analysis.

Body Paragraphs \ Concluding Sentence

Each paragraph should end with a final statement that brings together the ideas brought up in the paragraph and emphasizes the main point one last time.

Conclusion

The conclusion brings closure to the reader, summing up your points or providing a final perspective on your topic. All the conclusion needs is three or four strong sentences which do not need to follow any set formula. Simply review the main points (being careful not to restate them exactly) or briefly describe your feelings about the topic. Even an anecdote can end your essay in a useful way. The introduction and conclusion complete the paragraphs of your essay.

Don't stop just yet! One more step remains before your essay is truly finished.

Add the Finishing Touches

You have now completed all of the paragraphs of your essay. Before you can consider this a finished product, however, you must give some thought to the formatting of your paper.

- Check the order of your paragraphs.
- Check the instructions for the assignment.
- Check your writing.