

A guide to a model essay structure

A basic structure

While there is really no one 'standard' way of structuring an essay, there is a general model that can be used as a starting point for structuring essays until you are more familiar with writing in this form. As you become more experienced and proficient at academic writing you will experiment with and vary this structure.

The basic structure is that any assignment should have an *introduction*, a *body* and a *conclusion*. These words, however, don't help you very much because everything we write or say starts somewhere, has something in the middle and something at the end. What is important, however, is what goes into these three sections of your essay. For detailed examples of introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs see the [Writing paragraphs Quick Guide](#).

The introduction

A good *introduction* is really important (see [How to write a good introduction Quick Guide](#)) because it is like a plan or map of your essay. Your introduction should tell the reader what is going to happen in the essay and what your essay is going to be about. It is better to tell the reader explicitly what you are going to be talking about than to leave them guessing. The *introduction* has three to four main sub-parts.

Your introduction gives an *orientation* to the topic, usually by restating the topic of the question. You should also define any *key terms* for the topic. This tells the reader precisely what you mean when you use a term.

Your introduction tells the reader your position in relation to the topic. This is often called a *thesis statement*. For example, in an argument essay where you are asked to take a side, you should, say whether you are *for*, *against* or *neutral* towards the topic. In a discussion essay you might say what the topic is that you are going to discuss without necessarily taking sides until after you have discussed all the evidence.

Your introduction should then identify and list each of the main points you are going to raise in your discussion in the same order that you are going to raise them in the body of your essay. You should not develop any points or present any arguments or evidence in the introduction. The job of the *introduction* is to point forward to what is going to happen.

The body

The body of your essay should take up most of the word count. You should take up each main point you have identified in the introduction and develop it in one or more paragraphs in the same order as you mentioned it in the introduction. Do this until you have covered all points. The points you make need to be supported by evidence from the reading and research you have done on the topic. Make sure you cite your sources properly (see [Student academic integrity: An introduction Quick Guide](#)). Body paragraphs should either connect back to the introduction or connect back to the previous paragraph (see [Writing paragraphs Quick Guide](#)).

The conclusion

Your *conclusion* then, tells the reader what your essay has been about. It summarises what you have found out, discovered and concluded. Where the introduction outlines for the reader what is to come, the conclusion reinforces the main points of the body. The *conclusion* ties the essay together by pointing backwards and connecting back to the *introduction* and *body*.

Academic Skills Quick Guide

What is in this guide

- A guide to a model essay structure
- A table showing the outline of a basic essay structure
- Related Quick Guides

Model essay structure checklist

Essay structure	
Introduction	
1	Orientation to the question
2	Thesis statement
3	Outline of the main points you are going to discuss in the essay: (Main Points A, B, C ...)
Body	
Develop each main point in order in one or more paragraphs	
Point A	
Paragraph 1:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic sentence • Support evidence and examples • (Concluding sentence – optional) 	
If you need more than one paragraph repeat the same pattern.	
Point B	
Paragraph 1:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic sentence • Support evidence and examples • (Concluding sentence – optional) 	
Point C	
Paragraph 1:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic sentence • Support evidence and examples • (Concluding sentence – optional) 	
Keep going with the same pattern until you have discussed each of the main points you raised in the introduction.	
Conclusion	
Restate/summarise your main points. Final statement, which tells the reader what you have achieved, discovered, concluded.	

Related Quick Guides

[Writing paragraphs Quick Guide](#), [Writing a good introduction Quick Guide](#), [Academic integrity Quick Guides](#)