

How to Structure Your Essay

What to Consider

Starting an essay can be an incredibly daunting experience, especially when it comes to picking from the relevant information included in your research.

The purpose of an essay is to present a logical and reasoned argument replying to a specific question.

Your structure allows for your points to be laid out clearly to the reader in a way that is both focused and progressive.

It's important to remember that everyone has their own unique writing process, so it's important to find ways to enhance your writing beyond the tips I provide.

Here are a few questions to consider from the University of Birmingham's 'A Short Guide to Essay Planning and Structure':

- *Do I understand what my assignment question is asking?*
- *What is my instinctive response to the question?*
- *What do I already know that is of relevance to the question?*
- *What else do I need to find out?*
- *What have other scholars written on this topic and do I agree/disagree with them?*
- *What is the main point I want to argue or put across in this essay?*
- *What reasons do I have to support my main argument or message? (i.e., why should my reader believe me?)*

Try to break down the importance of your question.

What are the keywords?

What are the task words, (does it ask you to describe, discuss, argue, investigate, etc)?

Mind map your preexisting knowledge – see how much you already know and focus on areas you would like to pursue.

Now do your research!

Find books, journals, magazines, websites, and articles that might cover the topics you want to talk about. You may have to think outside the box if you don't have a lot of research for the question you choose.

If it's a very general question, then take note of what the other questions are asking and take inspiration from there. Make your points valid and relevant to what you are trying to say.

There are **3** important parts to your essay!

Introduction

(Say what you are going to say)

Main Body

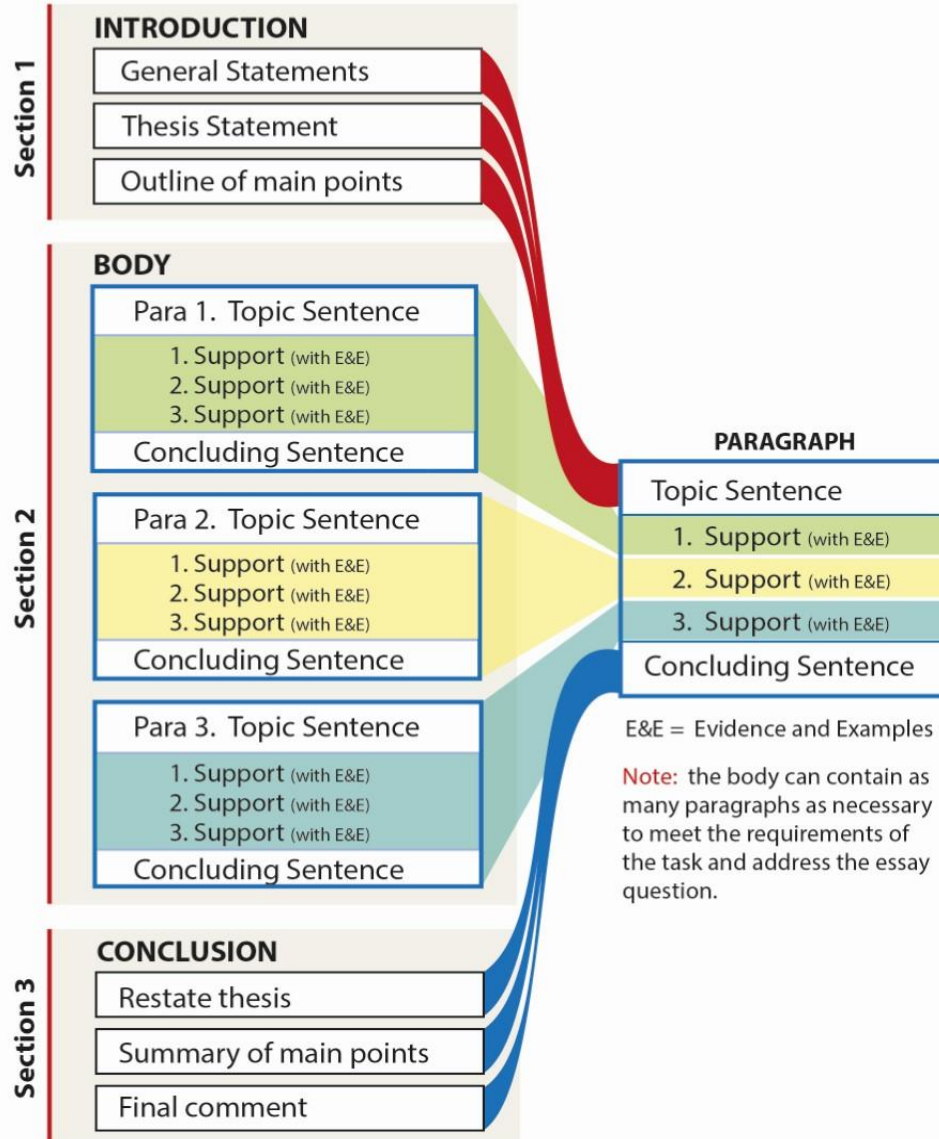
(Say it)

Conclusion

(Say what you have said)

BASIC ESSAY STRUCTURE

An essay has 3 sections: an introduction, body and conclusion.



As a result, your essay should be made up of around 5 parts:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. *Writer's arguments***
- 3. *Counter arguments***
- 4. *Refutation***
- 5. Conclusion**

Key structuring conventions to be used:

- Group similar ideas together rather than jumping around.
- Individual paragraphs should be differentiated typographically i.e., by indenting or by allowing additional line spaces between (check whether your school has a preference).
- Each paragraph should make only one main point.
- Think of paragraphs as mini-essays. Start with a topic sentence to introduce the main point of the paragraph; explain that point further; provide evidence for the point; interpret/analyse the evidence; then summarise the point and indicate how it links into your overall argument.
- Each paragraph should link to the next using transition words or phrases – such as ‘alternatively;’ ‘consequently;’ ‘as a result;’ ‘furthermore...’
- The paragraphs should be placed in a logical and consistent order. Play around with them until you get the best flow. They should feel progressive rather than list-like.

Your task this session:

Write as you think.