

DRAFTING YOUR ESSAY

Other Handouts:

- Analysing an Essay Question
- Planning Your Essay
- Editing and Proofreading

Once you have a good essay plan (see *Planning Your Essay*), with a thesis statement and some main supporting points, you can go on to build your argument in the form of an *essay draft*.

The essay plan (of a simple, 'several reasons' essay) will give you a basic framework for:

- Your argument, with supporting points
- Appropriate use of research sources
- A solid writing structure

Step 1: Write your introduction

An introduction is not for the writer to 'warm up' to the task; it is for the reader to be led into the topic. The number of words in an introduction should be approximately 10% of the total essay word count.

- Define the key concepts to be addressed in the essay
- Outline your main points – the data that supports your overall thesis
- Contextualise the thesis (explain its relevance and significance)
- Lead to your **thesis statement** (generally the last sentence of the introduction)

Hint!

The introduction gives an overview of your whole essay. Do not go into too much specific detail; avoid quotes – this is a 'big picture' of YOUR argument. Save the detail for the body of your essay.

Step 2: Write the body of the essay

The body of an essay comprises a series of paragraphs in which you support your thesis. In a 1-2000 word essay, each paragraph will be 2-400 words.

- Start each paragraph with a topic sentence. This will state the main point you will make in this paragraph.
- Now explain this point, and its relevance to your thesis. Do not wander off the point. Use paraphrases and quotations of research sources (correctly cited) to support this point. Always begin and end a paragraph with your own words.

- Begin and end each paragraph with either clear or implied links to the previous and next paragraphs, so that there are no big jumps of meaning, and there is a sense of ‘flow’.

Step 3: Write the conclusion

The conclusion summarises your whole argument. Do not add any new material (it is too late). The number of words in an introduction should be approximately 10% of the total essay word count.

- Remind the reader of the main argument (your thesis) and the reasoning behind it (your supporting points).
- Add any other remarks that emphasise the significance of the thesis.
- You may want to point to other implications (that can be addressed further in other research).
- Give the reader a sense of ‘closure’.

Step 4: Maintain the ‘flow’ of the essay with transitional links

Transitional words and phrases make clear the ways in which one point relates to another. For example, if you were discussing two opposing points of view in two paragraphs that follow one another, the second paragraph might begin with the phrase, *On the other hand...*

Common transitional words and phrases include:

- And, also, in addition, furthermore, firstly, secondly . . .
- Hence, thus, in this way, as a result, therefore . . .
- But, however, nevertheless, on the other hand . . .

These transitions can be useful in topic sentences, to make explicit the relationship between this point and the last.

Structural Checklist

- The introduction outlines your main points and ends with a clear thesis statement
- Each paragraph begins with a topic sentence that supports the thesis statement
- The paragraphs are linked to each other, explicitly or implicitly
- The conclusion summarises the thesis and its main premises
- The conclusion adds no new material

Tip!

You may need 2 drafts to get the structure of argument and writing into a good shape.