

The process of writing an essay

The following procedure is useful when writing an extended essay or assignment.

	Task	Skills Needed	Product
1.	Read the question and understand what you are required to do. Think about the subject, the purpose and the audience.	thinking academically	Essay subject.
2.	Think about what you know about the subject. Write it down in some way.	brainstorming	Diagrams or notes.
3.	Go to the library and find relevant books or articles.	library/research skills	Reading list.
4.	Find the books on your reading list and study them.	reading skills: skimming and scanning	List of materials studied.
5.	Make notes on these books and articles. Record full details of the materials you use.	reading in detail selecting & note-taking paraphrasing/summarising	Notes.
6.	Organise your essay/assignment.	planning organisation	Essay plan.
7.	Type or write your first draft.	writing from notes synthesis writing paragraphs typing/word-processing	First draft.
8.	Discuss your first draft informally with friends, other members of your class and your lecturer if possible.	speaking skills listening skills discussion skills	List of revisions/changes.
9.	Revise your first draft, bearing in mind any comments that were made in your discussions. Go back to 2. if necessary Produce your second draft.	use of dictionaries & reference books writing introduction & conclusion quoting/writing a list of references	Second draft.
10.	Proofread your draft.	checking for spelling mistakes checking punctuation and grammar checking vocabulary use checking style checking organisation,	Assignment with changes marked.

		references etc. checking for plagiarism	
11.	Produce a final typed version.	typing/word-processing writing title/contents page	Final assignment.
12.	Check everything.	final check	Hand in.

The essay

English essays are linear:

- they start at the beginning and finish at the end, with every part contributing to the main line of argument, without digressions or repetition. Writers are responsible for making their line of argument clear and presenting it in an orderly fashion so that the reader can follow. Each paragraph discusses one major point and each paragraph should lead directly to the next. The paragraphs are tied together with an introduction and a conclusion.

An essay has three main parts

1. An introduction
2. A main body
3. A conclusion

1. The introduction.

The introduction consists of two parts:

- a. It should include a few general statements about the subject to provide a background to your essay and to attract the reader's attention. It should try to explain why you are writing the essay. It may include a definition of terms in the context of the essay, etc.
- b. It should also include a statement of the specific subdivisions of the topic and/or indication of how the topic is going to be tackled in order to specifically address the question.

It should introduce the central idea or the main purpose of the writing. It should address the question.

2. The main body.

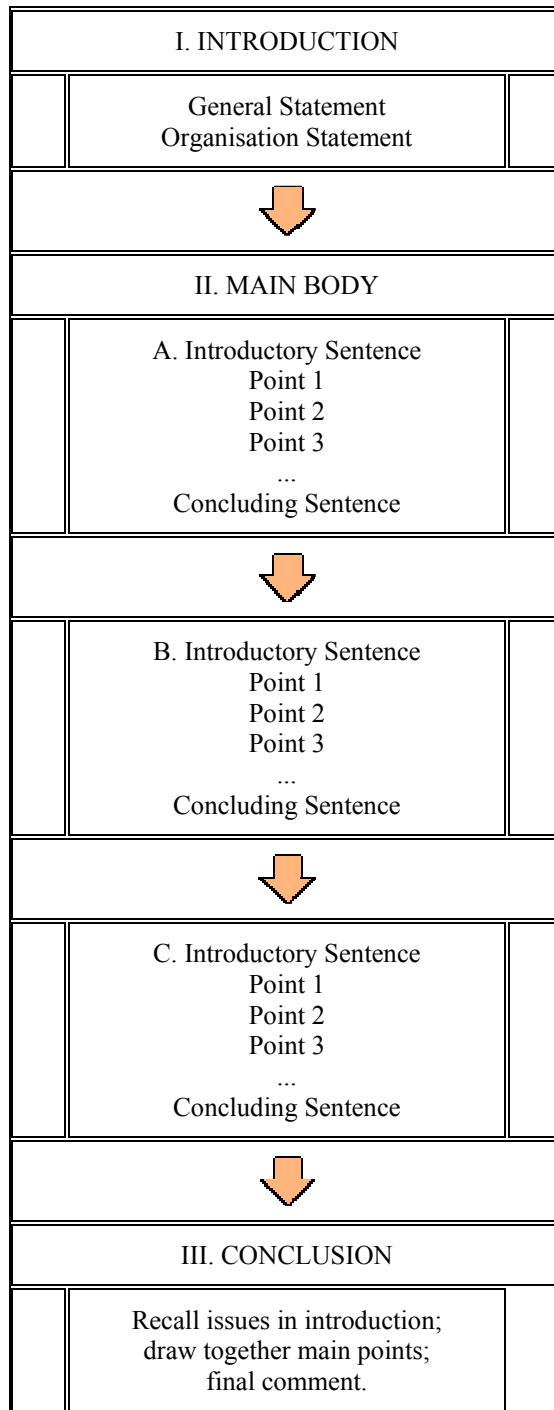
The main body consists of one or more paragraphs of ideas and arguments. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic. The paragraphs of the essay contain the main ideas and arguments of the essay together with illustrations or examples. The paragraphs are linked in order to connect the ideas. The purpose of the essay must be made clear and the reader must be able to follow its development.

3. The conclusion.

The conclusion includes the writer's final points.

- a. It should recall the issues raised in the introduction and draw together the points made in the main body
- b. and explain the overall significance of the conclusions. What general points can be drawn from the essay as a whole?

It should clearly signal to the reader that the essay is finished and leave a clear impression that the purpose of the essay has been achieved, and that the question has been answered.



References: A bibliography entry requires the name of the author, the date of publication, the name of the article (if applicable), the name of the publication (with volume number and page numbers) and finally the publisher's name and city.

Example: Abercrombie, D. (1968). Paralanguage. *British Journal of Disorders of Communication*, 3, 55-59.

Barr, P., Clegg, J. & Wallace, C. (1981). *Advanced reading skills*. London: Longman.

Check list

Here are some useful questions to ask yourself about your essay:

1. Does the essay deal with the topic that was set?
2. Does the essay answer the question that was set?
3. Does it cover all the main aspects and in sufficient depth?
4. Is the content accurate and relevant?
5. Is everything in the essay relevant to the question?
6. Is the material logically arranged?
7. Is each main point well supported by examples and argument?
8. Is there a clear distinction between your ideas and those of other authors?
9. Have you acknowledged all the sources you have used?
10. Is the length of the essay right for its purpose?
11. Is it written plainly and simply, without clumsy or obscure phrasing?
12. Is the grammar, punctuation and spelling acceptable?
13. Is it neat and legibly written?

EXERCISE 1:

Instructions: This is a compare and contrast type essay looking at the differences between international education in the USA and Australia. First read the essay and fill in the gaps with suitable words. Then indicate its main parts: introduction, main body, conclusion. Finally analyse the structure of the essay according to the check list.:

The Western style of education has gained popularity over 1) _____ last decade. Many foreign students come to countries like Australia 2) _____ 3) _____ USA to study at university 4) _____ improve their employment prospects. In this essay I will briefly compare 5) _____ contrast these two countries in terms of their appeal to foreign students. There are many similarities between 6) _____ two countries. Firstly they both have 7) _____ very multicultural population so it 8) _____ possible to enjoy food from your own country when homesickness arises. Also, as they are both large countries it 9) _____ possible to find an institution in an area with 10) _____ climate that suits you. Another similarity 11) _____ that their tertiary institutions have 12) _____ reputation of quality 13) _____ excellence in academia.

On 14) _____ other hand there are some appreciable differences. The main one 15) _____ that education in 16) _____ USA 17) _____ much 18) _____ expensive 19) _____ in Australia. However, many students think that it 20) _____ worth paying 21) _____ extra money as some American universities have 22) _____ world-wide reputation. Furthermore, as 23) _____ USA has 24) _____ much larger population there are 25) _____ wider range of institutions to choose from 26) _____ naturally, 27) _____ wider range of courses.

To sum up, America offers 28) _____ choice 29) _____ 30) _____ 31) _____ acknowledged reputation, but at 32) _____ higher cost. Australia offers similar quality but 33) _____ cheaper if you can find 34) _____ course that you want.

EXERCISE 2:

Correct the following bibliographies:

Critical voices on the economy. *Survey*, (1980). 25, 38-42. Lipinsky, E. & Bender, R

London: (1978).. Longman *Longman dictionary of contemporary English*.

Hughes, J'Inside-out, Outside-in: Which approach is best for the second language learner? , vol.19, no.3, pp159-66.(1986) ', Australian Journal of Reading