



HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

What is expected of your essay?

1. It answers the question
2. You have researched the topic - widely but selectively
3. You give reasons, evidence and examples
4. It has good structure with clear and logically expressed ideas
5. You use correct referencing, grammar and good presentation
6. There is no plagiarism and it is handed in on time and stays within the word limit

What are the steps involved?

1. Analysis of the question
2. Research
3. Formulating the thesis statement
4. Creating an outline
5. Writing the first draft
6. Revising and proofreading

Sources of information

- University Library
- Study guides
- University website & other relevant websites

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- Journal articles
- Other media
- Electronic databases (access through Massey Library homepage)

Other important information:

- Read the course guidelines carefully.
- Explore the dimensions and scope of the assignment (how big is it?)
- Establish what you already know / what you need to find out
- Provide a framework for your research
- Use the 6WH questions (WHO? WHEN? WHERE? WHAT? WHY HOW?)

Be clear about:

- The assignment question
- Expectations
- Audience
- Scope
- Length

Collect sources:

- Synthesise
- Analyse
- Arrange
- Outline
- Write
- Rewrite

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Thesis statement example

Essay question: Discuss the nature and influence of Howard Gardner's notion of multiple intelligences. Review and evaluate some of the key criticisms of his approach.

Thesis statement example:

Gardner's notion provides an important framework for future analysis of the idea of intelligence but fails to explore certain key factors.

Start writing

Write the first draft quickly. It does not have to be perfect. Keep your writing style simple.

Paragraph structure

Paragraphs have many parts:

1. Topic sentence
2. Supporting ideas
3. Evidence or examples
4. Concluding sentence

Maintain and develop just ONE central idea per paragraph.

1. Topic sentence

- Tells the reader what the topic of the paragraph is
- Links back to the question

2. Supporting ideas - a framework for the argument

- Builds upon the topic sentence
- Presents the "why"
- Gives shape to the argument

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3. Evidence and examples

- Gives your argument concreteness
- Provides your audience with practical examples
- Protects you academically by giving validity to your argument.

4. Concluding sentence

- Not always necessary
- Sums up point and/or links to next paragraph

Paragraph Features

1. Unity - the paragraph should focus on the idea
2. Coherence - sentences in the paragraph
3. Should relate to each other
4. Development - the paragraph's main idea
5. Should be supported by enough evidence

Using signposts to move forward and make your writing

- *Dynamic Highlighting*: Indeed, more importantly, furthermore...
- *Changing Direction*: In contrast, however, another point to consider is...
- *Adding a similar point*: Likewise, again, similarly.
- *Summarising*: Finally, lastly, to summarise, overall...
- *Consequences*: as a result, consequently, henceforth
- *Being more specific*: in particular, in relation to,
- *Giving an example*: namely, such as, for instance, for example,
- *Acknowledging and moving to a different point*: Although, even though, despite,
- *Following a line of reasoning*: therefore, hence, accordingly, as a result, to this end...

The Conclusion

- Briefly restate the thesis statement. This should pull the main ideas together in a general statement which summarizes the argument

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- Give a brief summary of the essay's main points
- Give a broad, final statement about the significance of the argument and give the essay a sense of completion.

Do not introduce new material in the conclusion.

Academic Writing Should be:

- Logical
- Clear
- Persuasive
- Evidenced
- Evidence of Critical Thinking
- Focussed
- Objective
- Formal (no slang or colloquialisms)

Editing and proof-reading

- Allow time between your drafts.
- Remove irrelevant/repetitious material
- Make the necessary changes/corrections to make your essay flow.