



Essay Writing

What is an essay?

An essay is a piece of writing dealing with a particular subject. It usually requires library research and presents the findings in a logical sequence using paragraphs.

What is the difference between an essay and a report?

The main difference between an essay and a report is the format used for presentation. An essay is structured with paragraphs and full sentences, whereas a report has headings, subheadings and numbered points. Another difference is that an essay engages in discussion and arguments, whereas a report contains facts and observations.

How is an essay structured?

It should be presented in the following order:

- **Cover Page**
It must include the title of the essay, your name, the name of your lecturer, the number and name of the unit, and the due date. Use the cover sheet provided by the College.
- **Introduction**
It introduces the topic and outlines the main arguments. It also serves to gain the reader's interest.
- **Body**
Each paragraph in the main body should contain one point with supporting arguments illustrated with evidence. Each paragraph should be linked leading on to the next one smoothly.
- **Conclusion**
It summarises the main points and often makes a judgement. Don't include any new material here and ensure that you have answered the question.
- **References**
At the end of your essay add a Reference List or Bibliography listing all the information sources used.

10 Steps in Essay Writing

- Step 1: Decide on your topic
- Step 2: Analyse the topic, determining the approach asked for and the main concepts and keywords. Try rewriting your topic using different words.
- Step 3: Brainstorm/mind map the topic, asking yourself How? When? What? Where? Why?
- Step 4: Identify and locate resources
- Step 5: Note taking
- Step 6: Planning the essay - write paragraph headings
- Step 7: Write the first draft
- Step 8: Edit and rewrite the final draft
- Step 9: Prepare the Reference List/Bibliography
- Step 10: Final checking – apply the finishing touches to the appearance and accuracy of the essay.

Hints on Essay Writing

- Length Guidelines: the introduction is approximately 10% of the total word length of an essay, the body 80% and the conclusion 10% of the total length.
- Remember, your essay should not just be an abbreviation of the material you have read. You need to analyse the information gathered and form your own opinions based on this analysis, supported by evidence.
- It is not necessary to write your essay in the order that it will be read. You may find it useful to write the introduction last, ensuring it is consistent with the arguments presented in the body.
- Proof read your work, checking the spelling, punctuation, grammar and expression. You will improve your marks if you ensure that your work is error-free.
- Pagination: the number of pages should be clearly indicated in the header or the footer.
- You need to acknowledge all information sources used in compiling the essay including another person's ideas or opinions, statistical material, tables, diagrams and direct quotations. Give full details of all the information sources used in the preparation of your essay in the Reference List/Bibliography.

Final Checklist

- Have you included a cover sheet?
- Does your essay follow a logical structure?
- Is each main point supported with evidence?
- Have you answered the question?
- Does the conclusion summarise the main points?
- Have you kept to the required length?
- Have you checked spelling, punctuation, grammar and expression?
- Have you acknowledged all your information sources in the Reference List/Bibliography?

Bibliography

Roberts, A. 2000, *Writing, reading and note making – the abc guides*, Retrieved: March 11, 2004, from <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/study/Essays.htm>

Summers, J. & Smith, B. (eds.) 2002, *Communication skills handbook: how to succeed in written and oral communication*, 5th edn, John Wiley, Milton.

Toronto Public Library, 2003, *Reading, writing and revising*, Retrieved: March 11, 2004, from http://vrl.tpl.toronto.on.ca/helpfile/ed_r0007.html

Note: There is an OIL (Online Information Literacy) module on *Essay Writing* available on the Central TAFE Library website at: www.centraltafe.wa.edu.au/library

