

Writing

Writing essays

Study
skills

Students write essays for a range of purposes.

There are 3 main types of essays:

- Discussion
- Argumentative
- Personal or reflective.

Discussion essays

Discussion essays examine different aspects of a topic. They compare, contrast and comment on different points of view.

Most essays are discussion essays.

Argumentative essays

Argumentative essays put forward arguments to support a particular point of view.

Personal or reflective essays

Personal or reflective essays present and explore ideas and concepts from a personal perspective.

Essays have:

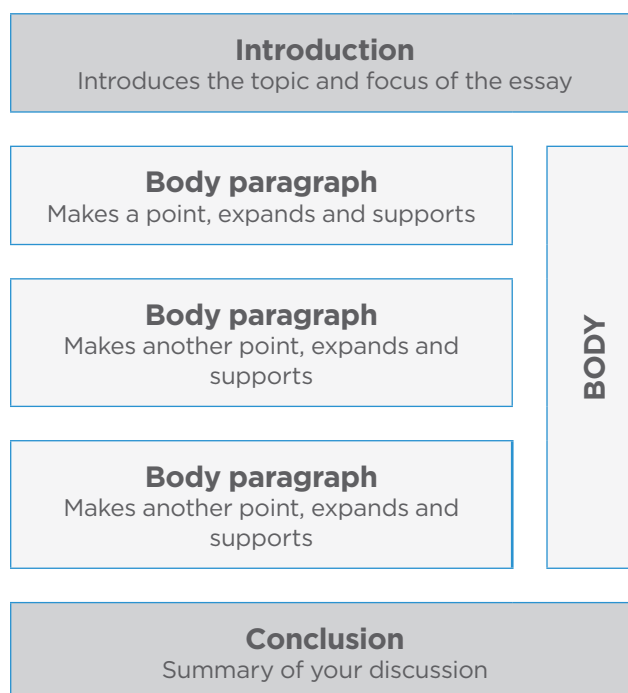
- different purposes
- the same basic structure.

Don't jump straight into writing the essay/report.

Remember to:

- analyse the question
- brainstorm ideas
- research.

A sample essay structure



Parts of the essay

The introduction

Your introduction should give the reader an overview of what your essay is about. As your essay grows and changes, you may need to adjust your introduction to accurately reflect your content. Some people prefer to write the introduction last, once the body of the essay is complete.

A good introduction will:

- provide a context
- draw the reader in
- indicate the particular approach
- introduce the main topics.

Here's a sample essay question:

Describe the changes in the structure and function of the Australian family since the post World War II years of the 1940's and 1950's. As part of your discussion, explore the reasons behind these changes, and analyse how they have impacted on the lives of men, women and children.

Example introduction:

Today in Australia, it is difficult, if not impossible, to describe the typical family. Now, in the 21st century, the reality of what constitutes a family, and how families and their members operate, is often very different from the structure and function of families in the mid 20th century. This essay will describe changes that have occurred from this period to the present in family types and in how families operate. It will explore the sociological, economic and cultural reasons for these changes. It will also critically analyse how these changes have affected the roles, lifestyles and wellbeing of men, women and children.

You can see how this introduction:

- leads the reader into the topic
- links to the question
- gives an overview of the essay content.

Body paragraphs

Here's a useful way to remember how a body paragraph is built up:

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Topic sentence - Make a point linked to the question

Expand, explain - Give more details

Evidence, examples - Support with material from references

Link - Link back to main point/forward to next point

Example body paragraph:

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004), families with children make up 60% of all families, but the variety and structure of these families has changed over the years. The introduction of 'no fault' divorce in 1973, reflected changes in social values. This legal change has resulted in a higher divorce rate and a large increase in the numbers of blended and single parent families, in contrast to the more common nuclear family which existed before this legal change. Advances in IVF technology have also resulted in creating same sex families with children, or children within families who may have a biological parent who has been a sperm or ovum donor. Surrogacy is less common, and in this type of family a child may have a biological mother and a birth mother, both of whom may play a role in the child's life. Therefore, many of the changes we see in families are the result of legal, social and medical changes in our society (Edgar, 2002).

Writing

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express

- Body paragraphs follow logically and cohesively from one to the other. The number of body paragraphs depends on the given word length.
- There is no set length for a paragraph.
- Balance the content of your essay to reflect the requirements of your essay.

Conclusion

The conclusion must:

- Tie together ideas.
- Show some personal insight.
- Leave the reader with something to think about.
- It must not contain any new information.

Example conclusion:

This essay has described the ways in which the Australian family has changed over the past 50 or 60 years. It has discussed how the types of families have become more varied and the roles within families are less bound by traditional stereotypes. It has demonstrated that many of these changes are attributable to changes in societal values and economic and cultural conditions. No matter how it has been defined in the past, or will be defined in the future, the family in some form or another is certain to remain a very important feature within Australian society.

References

And don't forget ... the reference list - on a separate page. Most essays will require you to follow a referencing system. For most courses at the Gordon, the Harvard referencing system is used.

HINT!

Essay planning template

Introduction

Give a lead in to your topic in one or two sentences, then give an overview of the content of your essay based on the question.

Discussion point 1

Make your first point in a topic sentence, expand & explain, give evidence, link clearly to question/topic.

Discussion point 2

Make your next point in topic sentence, expand & explain, give evidence, link clearly to your question/topic and possibly link/compare with previous point.

Discussion point 3

Make and support your next point, ensuring that it fits in logically and cohesively with your previous paragraphs.

Discussion point 2

Continue as above till your points are all made and your word count is getting close.

Conclusion

Tie up your argument/topic by summarizing briefly what you have been discussing/arguing.