# ANALYTICAL ESSAY WRITING

Essay writing is the form of writing most frequently required in senior school and tertiary institutions

An essay is written in response to an instruction or question. A good essay contains

* relevant and detailed evidence linked to the question
* a cohesive presentation of the argument/discussion
* clear, concise and mature expression

Some particular features of an analytical essay are its

* thesis/argument line
* organisation into paragraphs
* topic sentences that mark off the steps in the presentation of the argument/discussion
* register
* layout

1. **Line of Argument or Discussion/ Thesis**

A good essay is based on one central idea or argument. This is sometimes called the thesis. When planning an essay, a writer should decide on the thesis and keep to it. The thesis should directly address the question or topic. It is imperative to write the thesis or argument into the opening paragraph. Then, throughout the essay, everything can be linked to it. In this way everything written contributes to answering the question.

1. **Paragraph**

A paragraph of an essay consists of a number of sentences. Paragraphs are approximately 100 -150 words in length. All of the sentences in a paragraph should deal with the main idea of that paragraph by explaining the idea, elaborating on it and illustrating it with evidence.

1. **Topic sentence**

The topic sentence of a paragraph expresses the central idea of the paragraph. Everything in the paragraph should in some way relate to the topic sentence. Topic sentences most frequently appear at the beginning of a paragraph.

1. **Register**

An essay is always written in a formal style. The language of your essay should assist you in presenting your argument clearly and logically to your reader. You can assume that your reader has some experience in the language of your subject. You should use terminology and concepts (e.g. communism) and choose reasonably sophisticated words to express your ideas. Make the language work for you. Do not use slang or colloquialisms in your essay, unless you are quoting such words in order to support an argument. Deliberately structure your sentences so that they are clear and logical, expressing your point well for your reader.

1. **Layout**

Because an essay is a formal type of writing, you should follow certain conventions in the layout. Some conventions are:

* *Title page* The question should be written on the cover page. Additionally, your name, your teacher's name, date, and declaration of original work should be included.
* *Paragraphing*  Paragraphs need to be clearly separated from each other. This separation helps the reader to follow the steps in the essay. You can separate paragraphs by leaving a line between paragraphs or by indenting at the beginning of each paragraph.
* *Referencing*  In order to support an argument in your essay, you often quote a scholar on the subject. You signal that this is a quote by using quotation marks (inverted commas) around the quote. Note that you must also reference an author’s ideas or interpretation. In a Response to Stimulus essay, you need to give the name of the author but at the end of the quote, put the source number. Eg. Shirer, an American journalist living in Nazi Germany, believed “they could not organise themselves” (Source 1).
* *Bibliography* All written assignments should have a bibliography attached to the back, listing sources used alphabetically.

# STRUCTURING AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction**  introduce topic, time, place (orientation) | | | | | |
|  | | **STATE YOUR ARGUMENT/THESIS** | |  | |
|  | |  outline the main  your | points that support case |  | |
|  | | |  | | |
| **Paragraph 1**  focus on one  supports your | | | point that  argument | | |
|  | Include relevant evidence / name sources | | | |  |
|  |  Clinching / | | Linking sentence | |  |
|  | | |  | | |
| **Paragraph 2**  focus on one  supports your  ensure link to | | | point that  argument  previous para. | | |
|  | Include relevant evidence / name sources | | | |  |
|  |  Clinch / | | link | |  |
|  | | |  | | |
| **Paragraph 3**  focus on one  supports your  ensure link to | | | point that  argument  previous para. | | |
|  | Include relevant evidence / name sources | | | |  |
|  |  Clinch / | | link | |  |
| etc | | | … | | |
| **Conclusion**  restate your | | | thesis/argument | | |
|  | **Summarise significant key points that support your argument/thesis. No new points.** | | | |  |
|  |  | |  | |  |

# ESSAY PLAN ONE

**INTRODUCTION**

. Introduce topic (time, place, subject)

. State overall argument/thesis

. Outline of case (key points in argument – main point of each paragraph)

**PARAGRAPH 1**

. Introduce argument point

Supporting evidence/name sources

Clinching / linking sentence

**PARAGRAPH 2**

. Introduce argument point - ensure link to previous para.

Supporting evidence/name sources

Clinching / linking sentence

**PARAGRAPH 3**

. Introduce argument point - ensure link to previous para.

Supporting evidence/name sources

Clinching / linking sentence

**PARAGRAPH 4**

. Introduce argument point - ensure link to previous para.

Supporting evidence/name sources

Clinching / linking sentence etc…

**CONCLUSION**

. Restate argument/thesis

. Summarise most significant points in case

. No new points or evidence.

# ESSAY PLAN TWO

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Key-Question |  | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Introduction**   * topic, time, place * state argument/thesis * outline main points |  | | | | | | | | | |
| **Body** (paragraphs) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Topic sentence  * introduce main point to support argument |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | | | | | | | | | | |
| Following sentences  * supporting evidence / name sources |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | | | | | | | | | | |
| Concluding sentences  * clinch / link to next paragraph |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conclusion** | | | | | | | | | | |
| * restate thesis * summarise key points supporting argument * no new points or evidence |  | | | | | | | | | |

**ESSAY INTRODUCTION**

An Introduction is an overview of the whole essay. It tells the reader exactly what is in the essay.

A good Introduction is critical to a good mark. You can't get one without the other. It is the first thing the examiner reads, and judgements about your grade are usually made within minutes, even seconds, of reading.

#### Follow the C. A .0. formula

**Context:** Open with one or two sentences to provide the *context* to the topic being analysed. These sentences set the time, the place and the issue. They may also introduce a pivotal event.

**Argument:** Write a clear statement that sets out your *argument line* (your answer to the question). Make sure the statement uses the key terms/concepts in the question. If you can't think of a sophisticated way to write it, then just state the obvious, in plain English. I.e. turn the question into a statement. Usually, your argument is expressed in one sentence.

**Outline:** In no less than two sentences and in no more than four sentences, state how the argument will be supported. These are the key points that will be covered in the body of your essay -they *outline* the case you are going to present. The sentences in this part of the Introduction usually match the topic sentences in your essay, but with different wording.

**Therefore, the Introduction has *three duties* that it MUST perform.**

1. It must provide the historical context for the topic being analysed in the essay.
2. It must state your argument line, clearly and unequivocally.

3. It must tell the examiner exactly what key points will be analysed in the essay, and in what

order these points will be analysed. This is known as your case outline.

##### **Finally: some Don’ts**

* Don't use quotes in the Introduction unless they endorse in a comprehensive way all the dimensions of your argument. Be careful, however, you must comment on quotes -they can't just 'sit' there
* Don't repeat the essay question *verbatim* (word for word) in the Introduction.
* Don't use first person in your writing. Keep language formal and impersonal.
* Don't ask any questions. In any part of the essay this rule applies too.
* Don't overgeneralise (eg. "All women's lives were improved by...")
* Don't be emotive ( eg. "Life in the nineteenth century was horrendous. ..")
* Don't make sweeping statements (eg. "Since time immemorial, women have been...")
* Don't forget ~ the duties of an Introduction.

**BODY PARAGRAPHS**

**Paragraphs should follow** **TEC**

* Topic sentence
* Expander sentences
* Concluding/clincher sentence

The **topic sentence** of a paragraph expresses the central idea of the paragraph. Everything in the paragraph should in some way relate to the topic sentence. Topic sentences should appear at the beginning of a paragraph.

The **expander sentences** explain your main point in detail and support your analysis with facts, examples, statistics or other data.

The **clincher sentence** comes to some conclusion about the significance of the main point.

**Linking paragraphs**

Paragraphs should be linked clearly but unobtrusively so your argument flows. Using a word or phrase in the next paragraph is sufficient as a link.

**The qualities of a good paragraph**

1. **Unity** – all matter within the paragraph should relate to the central idea of the paragraph that has been expressed in the topic sentence. Once the idea has been introduced, the writer must keep to it and not change the direction in mid-paragraph.
2. **Coherence** – the points presented in a paragraph must link together well and present a coherent outline of the material and ideas. What you are saying, and how you are supporting it must be clear.
3. **Correct Emphasis** – the main point of the paragraph must be the one to emerge most clearly in the reader’s mind. Do not allow illustrations or secondary ideas to take over from the main ones. Every sentence should contribute to a single effect.

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# CONCLUSION

# Your conclusion needs to sum up your whole argument. One sentence is insufficient. Don’t start with “In conclusion” as it is obvious that as the last paragraph, it should be the conclusion! The conclusion needs to summarise the key idea from each paragraph.

# Many students complain that they find it hard not to repeat their introduction. This is a good sign as it indicates the argument has stayed on track. Stress your key point in the conclusion but make sure you have covered all points.