

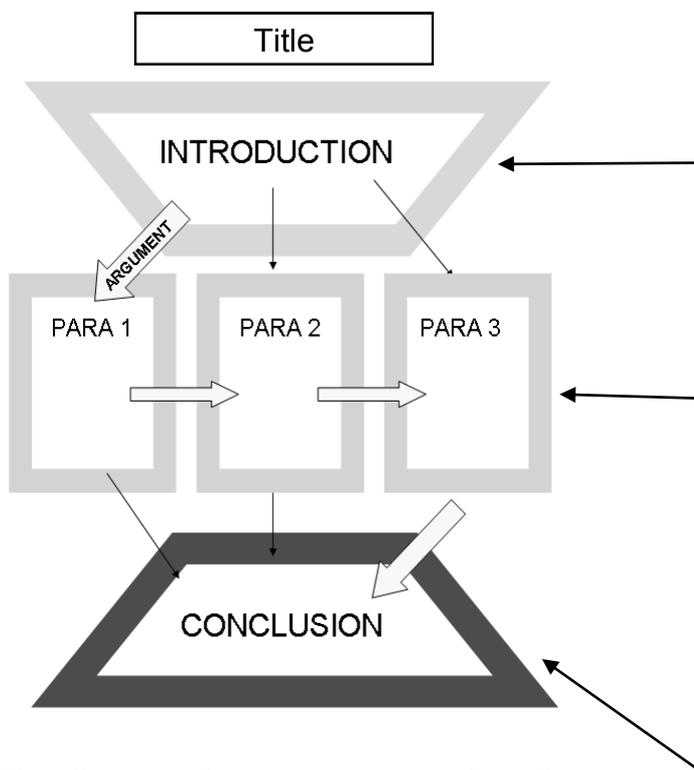
# STRUCTURING ESSAYS

## Good structure is important

A well thought out structure is central to a successful essay.

A good time to start thinking about the structure of your essay is after you have analysed your assignment question and done some preliminary reading and research.

A common way to structure an academic essay is shown below.



The diagram above attempts to show that **Introductions** generally move from general information to more specific information.

In contrast, **Conclusions** tend to begin with a specific focus, e.g. you can re-word your thesis statement, and conclude with a statement of general relevance or applicability.

The paragraphs between the Introduction and the Conclusion are referred to as the Body of the essay.

The **Body** consists of separate paragraphs which together make up the argument of your essay.

Begin each paragraph with a **topic sentence** which encapsulates the main idea you will develop in the rest of the paragraph. The ideas in each new paragraph should follow on from those expressed in the previous one.

Check that each main idea is directly relevant to your thesis statement (and to the question you are answering).

### Introduction

- Make a general statement about the topic.
- Provide background information.
- State the position you will argue for—your thesis statement.
- Mention the points you will cover in your essay—the outline of your essay.

### Body – developing your argument

- Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence.
- Develop each main idea by making e.g. comparisons and contrasts, using referenced explanations, examples, definitions etc.
- Conclude by summarising or linking to the idea/ideas being discussed in the next paragraph.

### Conclusion

- Restate your position/thesis statement.
- Sum up the main points made in each paragraph.
- Finish with a strong statement about the wider context.

### Note

Plan your paragraphs. Their order can add to or take away from the strength of your argument.

## Tip

Although the Introduction is the first section of an essay, it's best to write the final version after you have written the Body and the Conclusion. If you do, your thesis statement, and the outline of your essay, are more likely to accurately reflect what you have actually written in your essay.

## Coherence — a point to keep in mind

An essay that is well organised and has good paragraphs can still be ineffective if it lacks coherence. Make sure you use words and/or phrases that show the connections between ideas

- within a paragraph
- between paragraphs
- between sections

These linking words give your essay **unity**.

Linking words and phrases (sometimes called transitions words) seem invisible when they are well-used but obviously absent when they are not.

Checking that you have used appropriate linking words and phrases is a vital part of doing your final proof reading and editing.

## Last but not least - Titles

Effective titles provide an edge to your essay. However, it takes time to develop a clear, engaging title that captures what your essay is about. If you want a title that is **catchy and informative**, try the following.

- Develop a provisional title by playing around with the order of the key words of your essay.
- Change it as you get clearer about your main argument.
- Make your final decision when you have completed your essay.

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