

University of Anbar
College of Dentistry



Year: First

Course: English Language

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Essay Writing Skills

What is an essay?

- An essay is a **short piece of writing** which is **set around a specific topic** or subject. The piece of writing will **give information** surrounding the topic but will also **display the opinions and thoughts of the author**.
- Often times, an essay is used in an **academic** sense by way of **examination** in order to **determine whether a student has understood their studies** and as a way of **testing their knowledge on a specific subject**.
An essay is also used in education as a way of **encouraging a student to develop their writing skills**.

Types of, and Purposes for, Essays

It is important to determine the kind of essay you will write; what is its purpose? There are a variety of patterns to use when drafting the essay, depending its purpose:

- ▶ **DESCRIPTIVE:** The aim of descriptive essays is to **provide a vivid picture of a person, location, object, event, or debate.** It will **offer details** that will enable **the reader to imagine the item described.** Decide on a pattern of ORDER of details, such as top-to-bottom, outside-to-inside, near-to-far, etc.
- ▶ **NARRATIVE:** This type of essay **tells a story.** There **MUST** be a **REASON for telling the story,** and that becomes the main idea. Divide the essay into clear stages, such as “before, during and after.”
- ▶ **ARGUMENTATIVE OR PERSUASIVE:** **Present a claim or opinion and then provide evidence to support it.** It aims to **persuade the reader to agree with the writer's point of view.** Choose a topic that you have a strong opinion about. Be sure to take a **STRONG STAND** in your thesis statement—make a point about how to solve or eliminate an issue. Use the reasons for your opinion as a way of ordering the subpoints in the body of the essay.

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- ▶ **EXPOSITORY:** its aim to **explain or inform the reader about a particular topic**. It focuses on **presenting factual information in a clear and organized way**. There are various ways to explain something, including the following types of essays:
 - **PROCESS ESSAY-** This type is used to **explain how to do something**. It is patterned in time order, as recipes are, for example. Be sure to include the main point in telling the readers how to do it. Explain each step clearly and use details.
 - **COMPARISON AND CONTRAST-** Be sure the thesis makes a statement about the comparison—the essay must do more than just list the similarities or difference between two things. For most essays, use a subpoint-by-subpoint pattern of organizing the body of the paper.
 - **CAUSE AND EFFECT-** This is a type of essay which allows the author to **explain the cause of a certain thing** as well as being able to **explain the effects** of it.
 - **CLASSIFICATION-** Be sure to state the reason for the classification in the thesis. There must be a BASIS for the classification. Organize the body according to each of the categories (there must be more than two).
 - **DEFINITION-** **Explain the term beyond the dictionary definition, and clearly state the reason for defining the term.** Include in the thesis statement the CATEGORY or CLASS the term fits into and the specific traits that make the term different from all others in that category.



In addition to these four main types, there are also many other subcategories of essays, such as:

- ▶ **Reflective essays:** Explore the **writer's thoughts and feelings** on a particular topic.
- ▶ **Critical essays:** **Analyze a work of literature, art, or film.**
- ▶ **Scientific essays:** Present **research findings in a clear and concise way.**

The best type of essay to choose for a particular assignment will depend on the specific **topic** and the desired **outcome**.

Parts of Essay

The main parts (or sections) to an essay are:

- **Introduction:** An essay **introduction stimulates the reader's interest** and tells **what the essay is about**. The **last sentence** of an introduction is the **thesis statement**. Like the topic sentence of a paragraph, a thesis statement names the **specific topic of the essay**.
- **Body:** consists of one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic.
- **Conclusion:** The conclusion, like the concluding sentence in a paragraph, is a summary or review of the main points discussed in the body.

An essay has **unity** and **coherence**, just as a paragraph does. Transition signals link the paragraphs into a cohesive whole.

In a **standard short essay**, *five paragraphs* can provide the reader with enough information in a short amount of space.

For a **research paper or dissertation**, however, it is essential that *more than five paragraphs* are present in order not to overwhelm the reader with too much information in one paragraph.



Paragraph

Topic sentence
A. Support
B. Support
C. Support
Concluding sentence

Essay

I. Introduction

General statements
Thesis statement

II. Body

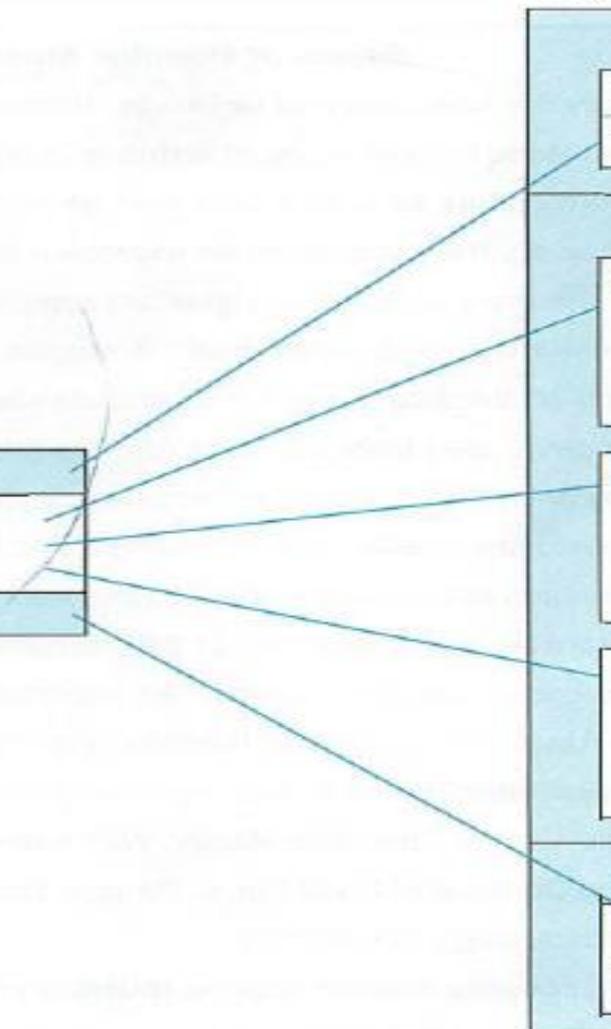
A. Topic sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
(Concluding sentence) ¹

B. Topic Sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
(Concluding sentence)

C. Topic sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
(Concluding sentence)

III. Conclusion

Restatement or summary of the main points; final comment
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The Thesis Statement

- ▶ The thesis statement is the **most important sentence** in the entire essay.
- ▶ It is a **clear, concise, and specific** sentence stating the **main idea** of the essay and covers **ALL** subpoints to be discussed. **AVOID** being **VAGUE**.
- ▶ It must be a **sentence**—it cannot be a fragment or a question.
- ▶ It must be **REQUIRE PROOF** or further development; it cannot be a fact.
- ▶ It should **NOT** contain phrases such as “I think...”; state it assertively.
- ▶ It should not be too **BROAD**, too **NARROW**, or **ANNOUNCE** itself.
- ▶ It is desirable to **LIST** the **SUBPOINTS** that will be developed in the **BODY** of the paper in the thesis creating a mini-outline of the essay. List them in the order they will be developed.
- ▶ The initial thesis statement used in the draft will probably be revised to include any new relevant ideas discovered in the writing of the essay. The revised thesis statement is the measure of relevancy for **EVERY** sentence; delete any sentences or ideas that are not included in the revised thesis.

Thesis Statement vs. Topic Sentences

► Thesis statement

A thesis statement is **the main point of an essay**. It summarizes **the main aim of the essay** and tells the reader what to expect in terms of an answer to the essay question (if it is given as a question) or to outline the main point being made.

Example:

This essay outlines the most commonly proposed initiatives for addressing climate change and argues that to address this issue both practical and political solutions must be found.

► Topic sentences

A topic sentence is **the main idea for a paragraph**. (This idea is sometimes referred to as an ‘argument’). You should be able to identify **one clear topic sentence for each paragraph**. It is usually (but not always) **the first sentence**. It tells the reader what to expect to read about in that paragraph. The idea expressed by the topic sentence should relate to the overall main aim of the essay (the thesis statement).

Example:

One of the most frequently cited initiatives for addressing climate change is the development of education programs for consumers that explain how to identify products that are more environmentally sustainable.

STEPS OF A BASIC ESSAY

I. Introduction (*establishes the paper's topic*)

A. **Opening statements** (Sentences containing some **general** comments about the subject at hand)

B. **Thesis Statement** (1-2 sentences saying what the paper is about and how it will be broken down. Whatever points are specified here will be reiterated in the Body in the *same order*.)

EXAMPLE:

Teenage drivers have the highest rate of accidents than any other group of drivers. Due to their lack of judgment, lack of experience, and unwarranted aggression, the high insurance premiums of teenage drivers are more than justified.

II. Body (*describes the paper's main points*)

- Includes the **evidence and support** of the paper in addition to the **author's ideas**
- **Paragraphs** must include a **topic sentence** which relates the discussion back to the thesis statement
- **Logical ordering of ideas:** 3 types of order
 1. **Chronological** order---order of time, good for narratives
 2. **Spatial** order-good for descriptions of locations; top to bottom,
 3. **Emphatic** order-least important to most important; most common for college writing
- Ensure that **transition sentences are present** to create a good **flow** to the essay
- Include **substantial examples and evidence** to support your argument and remember to **cite**.
- Make sure each example is **relevant** to your particular topic.

A. First Topic

1. Write one or two paragraphs (dependent on paper length) discussing the first idea in detail. In the same section, back up each paragraph with research, facts, examples, an anecdote (a short personal story), or some type of descriptive justification.
2. The **last** sentence in this section should be a **transitional** one. Try to make a statement that sums up the last paragraph, while also introducing the new topic.

EXAMPLE:

Not only do teen drivers' decisions show a marked lack of judgment, but they also show a problematic lack of experience.

B. Second Topic

1. Write one or two paragraphs discussing the 2nd idea in detail.
2. In the same section, back up the ideas with research, facts, examples, an anecdote, or some type of descriptive justification.
3. The last sentence in this section should be a transitional one as well. Try to make a statement that sums up the last paragraph, while also introducing the new topic.

EXAMPLE:

Obviously, since the new driver's lack of experience is such an important factor, high insurance rates are warranted in reflecting that. Similarly, overt aggression is also a contributing point in expensive monthly premiums.

C. Third Topic

1. Write one or two paragraphs discussing the 3rd idea in detail.
2. In the same section, back up the ideas with research, facts, examples, an anecdote, or some type of descriptive justification.
3. The **last** sentence in this section should be a **transitional** one as well. Try to make a statement that sums up the last paragraph, while also **hinting that the paper is coming to a conclusion or ending.**

EXAMPLE:

Clearly, the unwarranted aggression of the new driver is another justifiable reason for the high monthly rates.

III. Conclusion (*wraps up the paper*)

- A. Summarizing Statements (1-2 sentences rehashing the main points of the paper. **Do not ever introduce new thoughts into the concluding paragraph.**)
- B. **Reiteration** of the Thesis Statement (1-2 sentences restating the thesis in different words than used in the first paragraph)
- C. **Final Thought** (1 sentence that leaves the reader with your final thought that applies to the topic)

EXAMPLE:

The new driver should be held accountable for his/her actions. Therefore, high teenage insurance rates are justifiable since experience, judgment, and aggression are common factors found in young drivers. While at first glance insurance rates for new drivers may seem overly exorbitant, these rates merely reflect the serious challenges that come with being a new driver.

The essay writing process

The following **stages** are involved in writing an essay:

- ❑ **Understanding the task:** Once you've selected your topic, you need to be sure you understand what is required before you begin any research or reading.
- ❑ **Gathering information:** Once you have identified what you are being asked to do, you will need to consider what information and ideas you are going to put in the essay.
- ❑ **Structuring and organizing the content:** Having collected the information you need to write your essay. You should **structure** it in a **clear** and **coherent** way. It is a good idea to draw up an **outline** plan of your essay noting the main ideas you want to develop together with the sources of information you will be using to support them. The information you have gathered can be prioritized by identifying what is centrally relevant, what is partially relevant and what is simply irrelevant.
- ❑ **Writing the first draft:** You are now ready to write a **draft** of your essay. Remember to refer to the **outline plan** you developed throughout the writing process.

Writing style

- Write simply and directly
- Use short clear sentences
- Ensure that each paragraph has a focus
- Use clearly labelled images if they will save words
- Acknowledge the work of others

The essay writing process

□ Checking your writing

This is the stage when you need to **review**, **edit** and **proofread** so you can improve the way you present your ideas. A good way to do it is to read your paper when it's finished and then put it away for a couple of days. Read it again and answer these questions:

- Does it make sense?
- Is there a **logical development** of ideas?
- Do the **sentences flow smoothly** from one to another? If not, add some words to help connect them. Look at **transition words** you've used, such as therefore and however. If you've used the same transition words throughout your essay, check out some others you could use.
- Is your **spelling, punctuation** and **grammar** OK?
- Have you used the **formatting** requested by your lecturer or teacher?
- Have you used the **referencing style** expected by your lecturer or teacher?
- Have you checked your **references list** to see that it is correctly formatted?

Once you've checked your work, you can give it to someone else to read. Other people often pick up the simple mistakes or 'typos'. When we read our own work, we often read what we think is there, rather than what is actually there.

Transitions

Transition words give the writing a **smooth flow** and they **help readers move from one point to the next**. Transitions show **relationships** among sentences and paragraphs.

- ***Although** it was raining, Bob walked to work.*

*It was raining, **but** Bob walked to work.*

*It was raining; **however**, Bob walked to work.*

***Despite the rain, Bob went to work on foot.** (change word forms)*

- *Students seem to be under serious stress **because** they have so much homework.*

***Since** they have so much homework, students seem to be under serious stress.*

Logical relationship	Transitional expression
Similarity	also, in the same way, just as ... so too, likewise, similarly
Exception/Contrast	but, however, in spite of, despite, on the one hand ... on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet, although
Sequence/Order	first, second, third, ... next, then, finally
Time	after, afterward, at last, before, currently, during, earlier, immediately, later, meanwhile, now, recently, simultaneously, subsequently, then
Example	for example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate
Emphasis	even, indeed, in fact, of course, truly
Place/Position	above, adjacent, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, so, therefore, thus
Additional Support or Evidence	additionally, again, also, and, as well, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, then
Conclusion/Summary	finally, in a word, in brief, briefly, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in sum, to sum up, in summary

Note: Take into your consideration that each of these words or phrases may have a slightly different meaning. Consult a dictionary if you are unsure of the exact meaning of a word or phrase.

ESSAY STRUCTURE	MODEL ESSAY
<p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>THESIS STATEMENT</p> <p>BODY PARAGRAPH 1</p> <p>BODY PARAGRAPH 2</p> <p>BODY PARAGRAPH 3</p> <p>CONCLUSION</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Styles of Popular Music</p> <p>Music is truly the one universal language. Although all cultures have music, each culture develops its own musical forms and styles. In particular, popular music varies from culture to culture and from generation to generation. In the past 100 years or so, there has been an explosion of popular music styles in the West. Three of the more successful styles are reggae, punk, and rap.</p> <p>One successful style of popular music is reggae, which was born on the Caribbean Island of Jamaica in the 1960s and spread throughout the world in the 1970s. Reggae developed from a kind of Afro-Caribbean music called mento, which was sung and played on guitars and drums. Some musicians changed mento into a music style called ska by adding a hesitation beat. A few years later, other musicians changed ska, and reggae was born. Reggae's special sound comes from reversing the roles of the instruments: The guitar plays the rhythm, and the bass plays the melody. An important influence on reggae music was the Rastafarian cult. The Rastafarians added unusual sound mixes, extra-slow tempos, strange lyrics, and mystical-political themes. The best-known reggae musician was the late- Bob Marley. Well-known groups are Toots & The Maytals, Burning Spear, and Steel Pulse. Reggae has influenced later styles of popular music, including punk and rap.</p> <p>A second successful style of popular music is punk. Punk is a style of rock music that began in the mid-1970s as a reaction against previous forms of rock. Punks felt that rock music no longer represented the counterculture from which it had sprung and had, in fact, sold out to the mainstream culture. With their clothing and hairstyles, punks intended to shock society. The "punk look" included spike hairdos, theatrical makeup, ripped clothing, body piercings, and jewelry made from objects such as razor blades and safety pins. The onstage behavior of punks was aggressive and provocative. At concerts, fighting and other violent behavior by the fans were common occurrences. Punk music itself is simple (often just three chords), and its songs are short (rarely more than three minutes long). Its songs are anti-government, anti-authority, and anti-conformity. The first bands to popularize punk were the Sex Pistols and Clash in Great Britain and the Ramones in the United States. As with all music styles, punk has evolved into other styles. Groups such as the Dead Kennedys and Black Flag play hardcore punk, which is a faster and louder punk style. The band Fall Out Boy plays emo, a style in which the musicians become so emotional during a performance that they scream and cry. Pop punk, made popular by the group Green Day, is another new punk style.</p> <p>A third successful style of popular music is rap, which is also called hip-hop. Rap is a type of dance music in which the singers - rappers – speak in rhythm and rhyme rather than sing. The art of rapping originated in Africa and probably traveled to the United States via Jamaica, where it was known as toasting. In the United States, rap first appeared in the mid-1970s in the discos of New York City's black neighborhoods. Disco DJs teamed up with rappers to play songs for dancers at parties. At first, the role of the rapper was to keep the beat going with hand claps while the DJ changed records. Soon, rappers added lyrics, slogans, rhymes, and call-and-response exchanges with the audience, and rap was born. Early rap songs were mainly about dancing, partying, and the romantic adventures of the rappers, but politics became an important theme in rap in the late 1980s and 1990s. Most rappers are young black males, but there have been female rappers such as Queen Latifah and white rappers such as the Beastie Boys and Eminem.</p> <p>To sum up, popular music changes constantly. New styles are born, grow, change, and produce offshoots, which in turn grow, change, and produce offshoots. Some styles enjoy lasting popularity, but others disappear rather quickly. However, all contribute to the power and excitement of popular music in our time.</p>