

Main parts of an academic essay

Title Page: A title page should include the essay's title (capitalized and centred 2 inches from the top of the page), your name with your student number below it (not capitalized, 1 inch below the title), and the course and instructor's name with the date below it (not capitalized, 1 inch from the bottom of the page).

Introduction: The introduction has three goals: a) to introduce the topic of the essay; b) to present your thesis (which is to say the particular approach or argument the essay will make); and c) to tell the reader how the essay will be structured.

a) You may choose to introduce the topic by providing some brief background information or context, a brief story, or a surprising fact or statistic that engages the reader's attention and suggests the significance of the topic.

b) Once you have focused the reader's attention, present the thesis or argument of the essay. Depending on the complexity of your thesis this may consist of one or more sentences.

Remember: a thesis statement is not the same as your topic (i.e. something you want to talk about). A thesis, in contrast, is an argument, generally reduced down to one or more sentences.

c) You should end your introduction by giving your readers a preview of the main points you will make to substantiate the claims made in your thesis.

Body: In the body of the essay you will present the evidence and analysis that will substantiate your thesis. It is essential that the body of the essay be developed in a logical and orderly fashion following the preview that you presented in the introduction. The overall goal of this section is to develop your analysis and defend your argument – it is the main part of the essay.

This logically ordered body of the essay will consist of a series of **paragraphs**. Each paragraph should develop one central theme that helps you further your argument. Introduce this theme in a topic sentence; expand on the theme through the use of evidence or examples; and analyze the evidence to show how it contributes to the specific point you are making in the paragraph and to the thesis as a whole. Paragraphs should consist of several sentences rather than one, long sentence.

Conclusion: The conclusion is designed to bring together your essay's main points and to reassert or emphasize the strength of the thesis or argument. A conclusion is more than a summary, in that it is important to indicate why there is merit to your thesis or argument – what has been shown as a result of your investigation or exploration of the topic.

Notes (*Footnotes or Endnotes*): All academic essays will use information found in books, scholarly articles, electronic sources, or other sources. All academic essays must also inform the reader of which specific sources this information came from. This source of this information is "cited" in "notes" – either "footnotes" (which appear at the bottom of the page) or "endnotes" (which appear on a separate page near the end of the essay). Information about when to "cite" using a "note" and how to format footnotes and endnotes is provided in other sections of these guidelines.

Bibliography: Most academic essays require a bibliography at the end of the paper that includes all sources (written or otherwise) used in the composition of your essay. Information about how to format the bibliography is included in the "Formatting" section of these guidelines.