

Creating an Essay

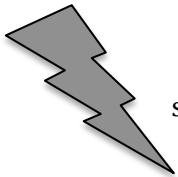


It's not as hard as you think!!!

Definition of *Essay*: a short piece of writing on a particular subject; an attempt or effort.

Questions to ask before approaching an essay (Prewriting Stage!)

- What is my subject, topic, or issue?
- What do I have to say?
- Who is my audience?
- What is my purpose for writing this essay? (To make a stand on an issue, to show how ideas connect, to explain what others have to say about an issue, to give personal experience, etc.?)
- What is my thesis statement or argument? (This should be answered after you complete research or brainstorm your ideas on the subject)



MYTH: Every essay has to be FIVE paragraphs.

ANSWER: FALSE! Academic writing does not always conform well to the "five paragraph essay" standard. Instead, your writing should adequately convey the information and points needed for the topic, whether that is accomplished in five paragraphs or not. Rather than thinking in terms of five paragraphs, think in terms of **Introduction**, **Body**, and **Conclusion**.

Introduction	Body	Conclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ An <u>attention grabber</u>: Get reader interested. Some people call this a "hook."✓ <u>Background information</u>: Define your topic or the problem. Why is your topic important? What is unusual, neglected, or misunderstood about your subject? Where is the common ground? What have others said? What led you to write about it?✓ <u>Thesis/Theme</u>: let us know your argument, your answer to a question, or your stance on an issue.✓ The introduction is usually one paragraph, but may be more than one if needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Paragraphs provide a series of connected passages and serve a variety of purposes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">--Define terms--Review literature--Present textual information--Present and analyze evidence supporting the focus/thesis.--Address counterarguments✓ Expand upon and analyze the points in the intro, support ideas, and explain your point of view.✓ Cite your sources correctly!✓ Transition smoothly between paragraphs.✓ Ask yourself: does each paragraph have one central idea? Is the information organized? Is there a logical order to the paragraphs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ <u>Revisit</u>: read what you have so far and decide what should be restated or summarized here.✓ Remind reader of the importance of the problem. Connect your thesis statement to the reader one last time.✓ <u>Tie loose ends</u>: don't leave important pieces of information hanging in your essay. Write them out!✓ Explain results. Make predictions or recommendations.✓ What is still unresolved? What could other writers address in the future?✓ Give one final blow to your essay that leaves your audience in wonder.✓ <u>Take a break</u>: You did all this amazing work! Come back to edit and revise later.

This is how it feels to finish an essay.



What NOT to Do When Writing Your Essay

Do not procrastinate!

“I can do this tomorrow.”
“I have plenty of time.”
“I got this. I’m not worried.”
“It’s not that difficult.”

→ Leaving tasks for the last minute never produces the best grades and leaves you with nothing but stress.

Do not use redundant beginnings.

“I am going to write about . . .”
“This paper will talk about . . .”
“My topic is on . . .”

→ There is no need to begin your essay this way. Your thesis/theme will cover this part nicely.

Do not assume.

“The reader should already know this.”
“I don’t have to explain this.”
“This is common knowledge.”

→ As writers, we can never be certain what our audience knows or does not know. Be specific and detailed.

Do not leave out a conclusion.

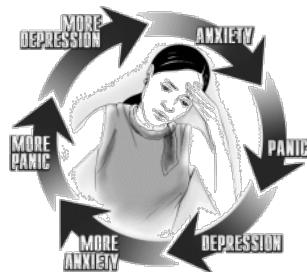
“Does every essay need a conclusion?”
“I already made all my points in the body,” or “Aren’t I just repeating the introduction?”

→ It may be true that a conclusion sounds repetitive, but it is still vital to closing your essay.

Do not use text-talk, casual language, or slang.

“FYI, OK?” “4u and ur friendz,” or “get here ASAP.”

→ This type of writing is never acceptable in college writing. Avoid it at all costs.



This is how it feels to procrastinate.

Sources:

Hjortshoj, Keith. *The Transition to College Writing*. Boston: Bedford, 2001.

Robinson, Linda. *Write Ahead: Skills for Academic Success*. www.longman.com

Wesley, Kimberly. “The Ill Effects of the Five Paragraph Theme.” *English Journal* 90.1 (2000): 57-60.