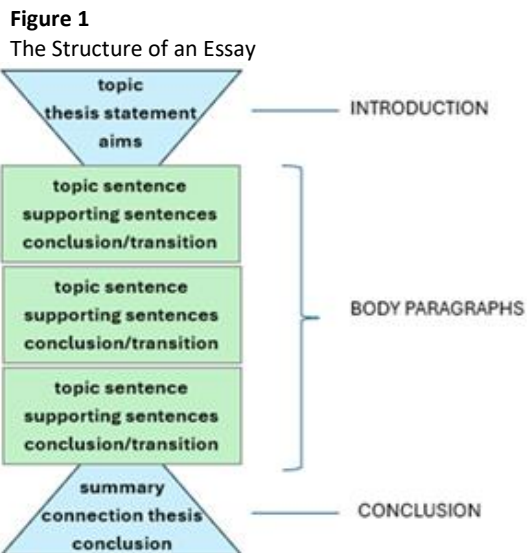


Academic Essay Structure

This handout will help you write an essay or short paper by covering the generally accepted standard of a 5-8 paragraph essay. This handout does not cover the structure of a report.

An academic essay requires a clear structure and well-supported arguments. The essential components can be seen in Figure 1: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.



Introduction

An introduction paragraph is often represented as an upside-down triangle because it starts with a broad, general statement and gradually narrows down to a specific thesis or main point. The main purpose is to present the focus and aim, by including the topic, thesis statement, and aims of the essay.

- **Topic [1]:** Give general context to help your reader understand the topic and then gradually narrow down to the specific focus of your essay.
- **Thesis statement [2]:** Present your main argument or position. This is the central idea that your essay will support. A strong thesis is specific, debatable, and clear.
- **Aims [3]:** Briefly mention the main points you will cover in your essay to support your thesis. This gives your reader a roadmap of what to expect.

Example:

[1] Computer science has revolutionised many aspects of modern life, from communication to healthcare. Among its many branches, artificial intelligence (AI) stands out for its ability to process vast amounts of data and learn from it autonomously. [2] The development of AI represents the most significant advancement in computer science as AI transforms industries. [3] To support this thesis, the essay will explore the foundations of AI, its applications in various fields, and the ethical considerations surrounding its use.

Body Paragraphs

The body of the text focusses on analysis, discussion, and presentation of results that relate to the introduction. The body paragraphs should focus on a single point that supports your thesis. The number of body paragraphs in your essay will be determined by the word count requirements of your assignment.

- **Topic sentence [1]:** Begin with a sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph. It should be directly related to your thesis.
- **Supporting sentences [2]:** Provide an explanation, evidence, and examples to support your topic sentence. This can include data, experts' quotes or results from research studies.
- **Conclusion and/or transition [3]:** Wrap up the paragraph by offering a conclusion on the main idea, and/or smoothly transition to the next paragraph by introducing the next topic.

Example:

[1] The foundations of artificial intelligence lie in the development of algorithms and computational models that mimic human cognitive functions. [2] These foundations are built on disciplines such as mathematics, computer science, neuroscience, and cognitive psychology. One fundamental approach in AI is machine learning, where algorithms are trained on large datasets to recognise patterns and make predictions. For example, neural networks, inspired by the structure of the human brain, form the basis of deep learning, which has led to significant advances in image and speech recognition (Smith, 2020). [3] Understanding these foundational elements is crucial as they inspire the innovative capabilities of AI, setting the stage for its transformative impact in various industries.

Conclusion

A conclusion paragraph is shaped like a triangle because it begins with a specific summary of the main points and gradually broadens to a more general closing statement. In this paragraph, summarise your arguments and ensure that they are connected to your thesis statement from the introduction before reaching your final conclusion. Also, be careful not to add any new information.

- **Connection thesis [1]:** Connect the arguments given to your thesis statement from the introduction by demonstrating how they support or reinforce this statement.
- **Summary [2]:** Summarise your arguments by briefly restating the main points and evidence presented throughout your essay.
- **Conclusion [3]:** Reach your final conclusion by synthesising the summarised arguments and thesis connection to provide a position on the topic discussed in your essay.

Example:

[1] In conclusion, AI demonstrates advances within computer science, revolutionising industries through its capability to process large datasets and autonomously learn from them. [2] As explored, AI's foundations in advanced algorithms and machine learning enable applications ranging from predictive analytics in healthcare to autonomous vehicles in transportation. In addition, ethical considerations surrounding the use of AI stress the importance of responsible innovation and regulation. [3] Thus, while AI leads to peaks in scientific innovation, it also requires responsible use to realise its full potential to transform the industry.

 **Top Tip:** Do not forget to add a title and references.