

Essay Guide

If you are not familiar with the basic structure and format of an essay, please refer to The Writing Process for a brief explanation. Please note that this is a guide only and we recognize that everyone has his/her own individual writing style and how he/she applies essay writing conventions.

Essay Evaluation

The following criteria are often followed when marking academic essays. Refer to your specific rubric for specific expectations.

1) Focus, Development, Organization

a. Focus of the argument

Do you stay on topic and move through your argument logically without straying from the argument/topic?

b. Development of the argument

Do you have a clear thesis (main points + argument)? Do you use appropriate examples and evidence to support your argument? Do you use appropriate transition words/phrases to move smoothly through the development of your argument?

c. Organization of the paragraphs/essay

Do you have the correct parts of an essay (introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion)? Do you have the correct structure of each individual paragraph in the essay (topic sentence, supporting points and evidence, and summary sentence)?

2) Vocabulary, Voice, Sentence Variety

a. Vocabulary

Do you use appropriate vocabulary for the subject matter and intended audience? Is it varied, or do you repeat the same words throughout the essay? Are you careful to not use slang or abbreviations (gonna, u, hafta)?

b. Voice

Do you make the writing interesting for your reader? Are you engaging your reader? Can your reader easily follow what you are writing? Are you using appropriate register (formal versus informal tone)?

c. Sentence Variety

Do you attempt to use a variety of sentence types (simple, complex, compound)? Do you use a variety of transitional words/phrases to move between points?

3) Grammar, Mechanics

a. Grammar and Mechanics

Are you aware of your spelling, punctuation, capitalization, verb endings, and the proper use of adjectives and adverbs? Is your sentence structure correct? Are words and phrases worded in the correct order using the most appropriate word choices? Are your sentences complete? Have you proofread your essay?

The Writing Process

Following the steps in the writing process is an essential part of producing a good essay. There are 3 main parts in the writing process, and when used correctly they can help to make your time writing an essay more efficient and less stressful. Please note that during tests and exams, time is limited, so it is good to practice how to use these techniques in an efficient way.

Step 1 - Planning

a. Brainstorming

This is a highly effective essay writing tool where you briefly write down everything that comes into your head when you think about the topic. You don't need to write in full sentences, just write everything down as quickly as possible (in point form). You can organize the information later.

There are a couple of different ways to brainstorm. Everyone works and thinks differently, so choose the style that works best for you.

b. Creating an Outline

Once you have brainstormed then you need to organize your thoughts into your strongest and most logical points. Look at your brainstorming and identify your 2-3 strongest points (these will form the main points for your body paragraphs) as well as any of the sub-points

that can be used to support your main points. You then organize everything into the most logical pattern.

The TLC has various outlining templates for you to use. Visit our website at georgebrown.ca/tlc or visit one of our centres.

Step 2 - Write your essay

Please refer to Essay Structure below for a basic guide to the standard essay structure.

Step 3 - Edit and Proofread

Proofreading your essay is essential. It can be difficult to catch errors while you in the process of writing, so you need to make sure you set aside enough time to read over your work carefully. Below are some common proofreading tips and strategies.

a. Edit

Re-read your essay looking for errors in content, logic, or development.

b. Look for one type of problem at a time

Read through your text several times, concentrating first on sentence structure, then word choice, then spelling, and finally punctuation.

c. Read your text to yourself

Though you are in a test scenario and so can't actually read the text aloud, you can read it to yourself by moving your lips silently. This helps you to hear the mistakes a lot easier.

d. Use your dictionary

Use the dictionary to check for any misspelled words or if you have used certain words correctly.

e. Have your own error checklist in mind

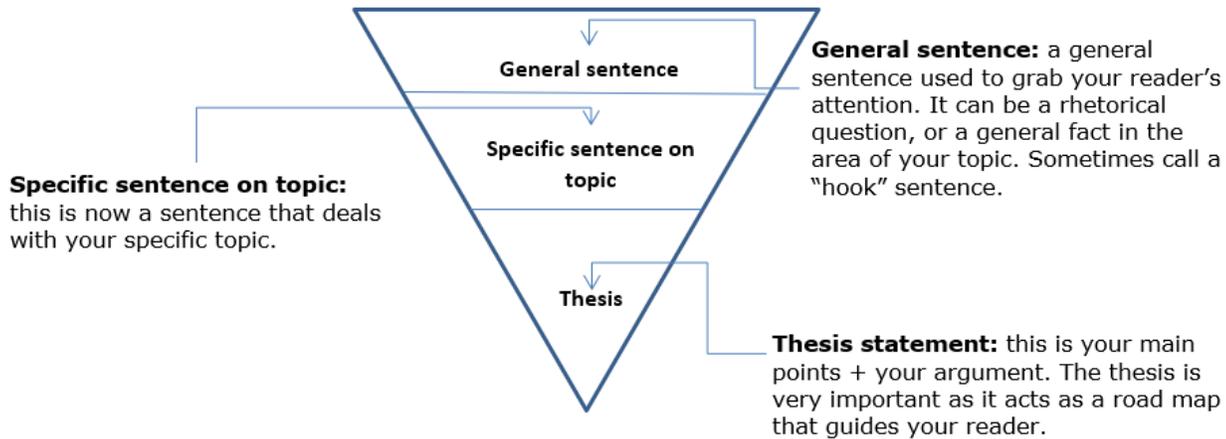
Be aware of the types of mistakes you commonly make, and then look for the same types of errors each time you proofread.

Essay Structure

If you're not familiar with the standard essay, read the explanation below on what should be included.

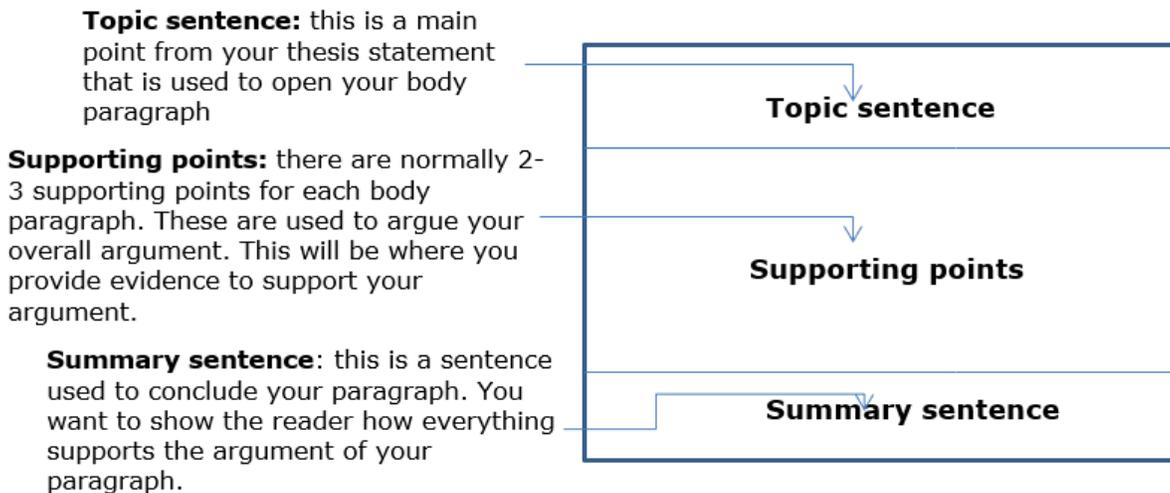
1. Introduction

A basic introduction usually has approximately 3-5 sentences. You should think of an introduction as an up-side-down triangle where you are moving from the general to the specific.



2. Body Paragraphs

The number of body paragraphs you have will depend on the number of main points in your thesis (and therefore the number of main points you are using to prove your overall argument). EACH body paragraph should have the following:



3. Conclusion

Often the conclusion is seen as a repeat of your introduction, but it's really not. While the introduction is an up-side-down triangle, picture the conclusion as a right-side-up triangle where you move from the specific to the general.

