

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

To write an essay you have to follow some steps:

1. Choose the Type of Essay

The first step to write an essay is to define what type of essay you are writing. There are four main categories into which essays can be grouped:

- **Narrative essays** : Tell a story or impart information about your subject in a straightforward, orderly manner, like in a story.
- **Persuasive essays**: Convince the reader about some point of view.
- **Expository essays**: Explain to the reader how to perform a given process.
- **Descriptive essays**: Focus on the details of what is going on. For example, if you want to write a descriptive essay about your trip to the park, you would give great details about what you have experienced: how the grass felt beneath your feet, what the park benches looked like, and anything else the reader would need to feel as if he were there.

Knowing what kind of essay you are trying to write can help you decide on a topic and structure your essay in the best way possible. Here are few other types of essays:

- **Argumentative essays**: Take a position on a controversial issue and present evidence in favor of your position.
- **Compare and contrast essays**: Identify similarities and differences between two subjects that are, typically, under the same umbrella.
- **Problem solution essays**: Describe a problem, convince the reader to care about the problem, propose a solution, and be prepared to dismantle objections.
- **Informative essays** : Educate the reader on a particular topic with facts.

2. Brainstorm Your Topic

You cannot write an essay unless you have an idea of what to write about. Brainstorming is the process in which you come up with the essay topic; you need to simply sit and think of ideas during this phase.

- Write down everything that comes to mind as you can always narrow those topics down later.

- Brainstorming can be a great way to develop a topic more deeply and to recognize connections between various facets of your topic.
- Once you have a list of possible topics, it's time to choose the best one that will answer the question posed for your essay.
- Pick the best topic idea from your list and start moving forward with your essay writing.

3. Research the Topic

Once you have done your brainstorming and chosen your topic, you may need to do some research to write a good essay. Go to the library or search online for information about your topic and interview people who might be experts in the subject.

Keep your research organized so that it will be easy for you to refer back to. This also makes it easier to cite your sources when writing your final essay.

4. Choose a Writing Style

The writing style that you choose for your essay is dictated by your teacher or the topic of your paper. In general, there are three writing styles you might come across in high school and college.

- **MLA (Modern Language Association)** is designed for humanities and language arts essays. This is the most common writing style used by high school and college students.
- **APA (American Psychological Association)** was created for social science and psychology research papers and essays. It is the second most common writing style out there.
- **Chicago Manual of Style**, also known as Turabian, it is used for bibliography and scientific paper. Mostly used by college students and professionals.

5. Develop a Thesis

Your thesis statement is the main point of your essay; it is essentially one sentence that says what the essay is about. For example, your thesis statement might be "Dogs are descended from wolves." You can then use this as the basic premise to write your entire essay, remembering that all the different points throughout the process must lead back to this main thesis. You should usually state your thesis in your introductory paragraph.

6. Outline Your Essay

The next step is to outline what you are going to write about. This essentially means; draw the skeleton of your paper. Writing an outline can help to ensure that your paper is logical, well organized and flows properly. If you've been tasked with an argumentative essay, here is the best formula for an argumentative essay outline:

- Start by writing the thesis statement at the top then write a topic sentence for each paragraph below that. This means; you should know exactly what each of your paragraphs is going to be about before you write them.
- Do not jumble too many ideas in each paragraph or the reader may become confused.
- Ensure you have transitions between paragraphs so the reader understands how the paper flows from one idea to the next.
- Fill in supporting facts from your research under each paragraph. Make sure each paragraph ties back to your thesis, and creates a cohesive and understandable essay.

7. Write the Essay

Once you have an outline, it's time to start writing.

- ❖ Write based on the outline itself to create a whole, cohesive and clear essay.
- ❖ Edit and re-read your essay to make sure it sounds exactly the way you want it to. Here are some things to remember:
 - Revise for clarity, consistency and structure.
 - Each of your thesis paragraphs should have a topic sentence that tells readers what the rest of the paragraph will be about.
 - Make sure everything flows together. As you move through the essay, transition words will be paramount. They are the glue that connects the paragraphs together and prevents the essay from sounding disjointed. You can even use a list of transition words to help you get started.
 - Reread your introduction and conclusion. Will the reader walk away knowing exactly what your paper was about?
 - In your introduction, it's important to include a hook. This is the line that will lure the readers in and encourage them to want to learn more. For further information, check out how to write a hook.

8. Check Spelling and Grammar

- Now your essay is written, but you're not quite done. Reread what you've written and look out for mistakes and typos.
- Revise the technical errors.
- Check for grammar, punctuation and spelling errors. You cannot always rely on a spell checker to recognize every spelling mistake. Sometimes, you can write a word incorrectly but your misspelling will also be a word, such as spelling "from" as "form."
- Another common area of concern is quotation marks. It's important to cite your sources with accuracy and clarity.
- You may also want to consider the difference between **quoting**, **paraphrasing** and **summarizing**.

-**Quoting**: is reserved for text lines that are identical to an original piece of writing.

-**Paraphrasing**: is used for large sections of someone else's writing that you want to convey in your own words.

-**Summarizing**: involves writing the main points of someone else's text in your own words.

Standard Five Paragraph Essay Outline Format

I. Introduction

- A. Creative Opening to catch the audience's attention. Students can use quotes, interesting facts and figures, joke or anecdotes, etc.
- B. Background information
- C. Preview of the main points of the essay.
- D. Thesis Statement affirms the main idea of the essay.

II. Body

A. Paragraph 1

- 1. Topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph and transitions from the paragraph before it
- 2. Supporting details defend or strengthen the topic sentence. Students should use at least two supporting details in each paragraph. Supporting details can include facts, examples, and expert opinions about a specific subject. If primary or secondary sources are used, students must use MLA parenthetical citations.

B. Paragraph 2

- 1. Topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph and transitions from the paragraph before it
- 2. Supporting details defend or strengthen the topic sentence

C. Paragraph 3

- 1. Topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph and transitions from the paragraph before it
- 2. Supporting details defend or strengthen the topic sentence

(NOTE: More paragraphs can be created using the same format.)

III. Conclusion

- A. Restate thesis statement. Students should reword the thesis statement.
- B. Summarize main points. Students should reword topic sentences.
- C. Tie to Opening. Students should relate their conclusion to the opening of the essay.