

A Brief Guide to Writing Essays

1. Read through the **list of topics**, think about it, and make your choice.
2. **Structure** your essay carefully
Your essay must be structured, in that the theme or argument being presented is **developed in a logical, coherent and orderly fashion**. Each new step follows logically from the previous point. To achieve this aim, it is often helpful to **prepare a skeleton** noting the key points you wish to include.
3. **Introduction**
You should begin with one (or two) introductory paragraphs in which you define the topic or problem (i.e. tell the reader what your essay is about.) Paraphrase (rewrite) and explain **the topic/statement in your own words**. Clarify your understanding of the topic.
Finally, **explain what you are going to do** in the following.
Example: *In the following, I will try to find out whether ...*
4. **Discussion**
Spot **important words or elements** and define them if necessary. If adequate, draw a **comparison** (describe similarities and differences). Formulate assumptions about the **background** of the claim/opinion in question. Ask yourself whether this claim is **relevant today** or not and why. Always be as concrete as possible: provide **concrete examples!** You may also state **your attitude** towards the subject and explain it.
5. **Conclusion**
Your essay should end with a statement of the conclusions that you have drawn based on what has been discussed before. Your conclusion provides an **answer to the question** you outlined in your introductory paragraph(s), by drawing together the different aspects of your argument. You may not always have an answer to give: but summarising your arguments cogently can be equally useful.
6. **Additional comments**
It is your responsibility to ensure that the **reader will be able to follow** your argument easily, and that s/he will not misunderstand what you are trying to say.
A **paragraph** should be like a lady's skirt: long enough to cover the essentials but short enough to keep it interesting.
Always use formal **language** and do not use any contracted forms. Make correct use of spelling, grammar and punctuation.