

# How to write an essay

An **essay** is a composition focused on a subject of discussion in which the writer has to give his own argument, that is a series of reasons to support his thesis. Writing an essay means organising a set of ideas into an argument and presenting them in a linear way, one idea at a time. The contents must be objective and the structure must be logical.

## Structure

- **Introduction:** the first paragraph introducing the main idea of the essay. Some background information such as facts or definitions about the topic are necessary. It has the function to capture the interest of the reader
- **Arguments:** supporting paragraphs to develop the main idea of the essay
- **Conclusion:** restatement of the main idea of the essay in different words and expression of a personal opinion.

## Prewriting

Prepare your ideas:

- Read carefully about the subject of your essay and ask yourself, "What is the central idea?" "What do I think about it?"
- Write down facts related to your essay topic (pros and cons); ask yourself, "What do I know about this topic?". Select facts and ideas and decide which ones will best support the main idea of your essay
- Once you have chosen the facts and ideas, map them and decide in which order you want to put them in the essay
- Develop each supporting point with facts, details, examples
- Put the most important argument at the end, just before the conclusion
- Remember that the map is a preliminary record of your ideas, it is essential for a successful planning of the structure of the essay in paragraphs.

## Writing

Turn your ideas into sentences:

- Write the thesis statement and some background, general information about the topic
- Develop each supporting idea
- Mention cons to your thesis
- Write an objective conclusion also including your opinion. Do not introduce new arguments.

## Editing

Read your essay, check for mistakes (spelling, grammar) and correct them.

## Language

- Make sure each sentence has a subject
- Make sure your subjects and verbs agree with each other
- Check the verb tenses of each sentence
- Make sure that each sentence makes sense
- Use a dictionary to help you find additional words to express your meaning.

## Useful phrases:

- **Introduction:**
  - *It is a fact that ...*
  - *Some people say/think ...*
  - *It is general opinion that ...*
  - *It is widely known/believed that ...*
  - *I argue for ...*
  - *I claim that ...*
- **Arguments:**
  - *First ... /Second ...*
  - *Another argument for / against ...*
  - *It is also said that ...*
  - *They argue that ... because ...*
- **Conclusion:**
  - *I think that ...*
  - *My opinion is ... because ...*
  - *Looking at the arguments I would say ...*

## Linking words

- **For listing different points:**
  - *The first/second/ point/aspect/element to be considered is ... /Not to mention /Together with .../In the same way/To say nothing of ...*
- **For introducing disadvantages:**
  - *On the other hand/However/Nevertheless/Even though/While/Despite/ In contrast/On the contrary/In spite of/Instead ...*
- **For adding additional ideas:**
  - *In addition to .../Furthermore/Another/Moreover/Besides/Also/As well/ Additionally ...*
- **For showing cause and effect:**
  - *Consequently/Therefore/Thus/As a result/As/Since/So/Because (of)/Due to ...*
- **For summarizing ideas:**
  - *In short/In conclusion/In a nutshell/All things considered/As shown before/ On the whole/As has been noted ...*