



Multidisciplinary Writing Center's Basic Essay Handout

All college students have to write essays. Though they may seem daunting, every essay has a basic structure to follow. Writing essays can become easier as you learn how to use the structure to your advantage.

Outline: Though outlines are optional, they prove to be valuable tools that make writing an essay much easier, because they guide you through the process. An outline helps you figure out your main topic points and how to stay on topic throughout the essay.

An outline is rather simple to create because no matter how long an essay is, it will always have the same structure and components:

- I. **Introduction Paragraph:** The introduction paragraph introduces the subject of your essay and explains why it is important. It also gives the points and ideas that you will discuss about that subject through the essay.

One of the most important elements of your introduction paragraph is the thesis statement. A thesis statement is a sentence or two that provides a condensed explanation of your essay; it acts as an overview of what your essay will discuss and the purpose of it.

- II. **Body Paragraphs:** The number of body paragraphs in an essay will vary in length depending on the type and subject of the essay.

However, the basic college essay will have at least three paragraphs, one paragraph for each point you want to make. When creating the body of your essay, make sure the paragraphs move logically and smoothly from point-to-point so that readers can follow your main subject.

- III. **Conclusion:** The conclusion of your essay is a quick recap of the subject and points that you made. You will want to provide a review of your thesis statement and how you revealed the purpose of your essay through your supporting points. Often, this is when you realize the full meaning of your thesis. The conclusion is also a good place to emphasize a useful, interesting, or surprising idea you uncovered in your essay.

Outline an Essay by Taking Notes:

Introduction:

Body Paragraph 1:

Body Paragraph 2:

Body Paragraph 3:

Conclusion:

Creating a Thesis Statement: To start, write a draft of what you want to discuss or what point(s) you want to prove in your essay. It is helpful to keep notes so that your thesis statement grows with the paper. Often, your thesis statement is the last element of your essay to finish, simply because after the paper is written you have a better understanding of your purpose.

Thesis Statement:

Elements of a Paragraph: Like essays, paragraphs have a structure that will help you organize and effectively communicate the point and idea you're making. Each paragraph is separated by the sub-points of the subject and are linked together through idea by topic and transition sentences. Similar to knitting, these sentences connect each paragraph and keep your essay on topic.

1. A topic sentence reveals the main point of the paragraph. It is a preview that allows your reader to know what point you will discuss.
2. A transition sentence can come anywhere in your paragraph and functions to bring one point to a close and lead into the next point. This sentence will reinforce the point you have made and guide your reader into the next paragraph's point. It is a linking agent that connects to the topic sentence of the next paragraph, and over the course of several paragraphs, will link your whole paper together.

Body Paragraph 1:

Topic Sentence: _____

Point: _____

Transition: _____

Body Paragraph 2:

Topic Sentence: _____

Point: _____

Transition: _____

Body Paragraph 3:

Topic Sentence: _____

Point: _____

Transition: _____

Conclusion: The conclusion of your essay is a quick recap of the subject and points that you made. You will want to provide a review of your thesis statement and how you revealed the purpose of your essay through your points. Often, this is when you realize the full meaning of your thesis. The conclusion is also a good place to emphasize a useful, interesting, or surprising idea you uncovered in your essay.

What you talked about:

Review of your thesis and how you developed it:

What conclusion can be drawn because of this essay:

Contact the MWC if you need any essay assistance

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