

A good essay always follows certain rules and norms regarding its structure. An essay is far more important than any piece of writing, scribbled haphazardly with random ideas expressed in the same order as they appear in the writer's mind.

Think of your essay as if it were part of an organized trip. Your introduction is like the start of the journey. You identify where you are going and what route you will take to reach your destination. The body is like the middle of the journey, getting to the destination and reaching a conclusion. Finally, the conclusion is like reflecting on the journey. That is, establishing how you reached your conclusion, justifying your argument.

Most universities and colleges require essays that are open-ended enough to allow for creativity and flexibility to allow you to draw upon your personal experiences and challenges to make you stand out amongst other applicants. At the end of the day, think of the essay as part of a larger competition, and think of how you can use the essay to stand out in a competitive pool of candidates. Here's how you can do it.

Core elements of an essay

Introduction

The introduction is a short paragraph explaining what the essay is all about. The title and the introductory paragraph are the two most important parts of an essay. So try to make your introductory paragraph as attractive as possible. A good introduction is the one that gives a clear idea to the reader regarding the purpose of the essay. It should be short, precise and to the point.

Supporting Paragraphs

Supporting paragraphs form the main body or the content of the essay. This is where you will be expressing your point by making a range of arguments and provide relevant evidence for the same. Remember that your essay should cover all the points with the context of your topic.

Conclusion

This is a concluding paragraph in which you sum up all the ideas expressed in the supporting paragraphs. It reiterates the purpose or theme of the essay. In short, it is the introduction paragraph expressed in different words and supported by an argument in favor of your point. The main focus when you think of how to write a conclusion should be on creating a powerful effect on the reader's mind: your essay must attempt to persuade.

Steps in writing an essay

Deciding a Title

Oftentimes, a title or an essay "prompt" is decided for you, and you do not have much of choice. However, when you have the liberty of choosing your essay topic ideas, go for a topic that you are really passionate about. You are bound to write a good essay if the subject interests you.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is a single sentence which states your main point or core claim. It is a direct argument which is explained in supporting paragraphs. A thesis statement is often the main idea around which the content revolves.

Form an Outline

Now that you are ready with your thesis statement and have all the necessary information at hand, you can actually move to writing an essay. Form a rough outline of your essay by noting down all the ideas. Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence and feature supporting statements directly related to the topic sentence. Be sure to use bridge statements to smoothen transitions between paragraphs. Also include effective transition words or phrases to help the reader move from one body paragraph to another.

How to write an effective essay for undergraduate applications



Analyze

Now that you have the requisite information at your disposal; it is time to actually analyze what's important and what's not. Simply put: distill the best and throw out the rest – especially what doesn't support your core claim.

Brainstorm, write and rewrite.

This is the step where you actually begin to develop ideas and put it down on paper. Look out for strengths and weaknesses in the logic of your title and of your essay. Develop your arguments and question yourself to find answers. Do not rush into finalizing your thesis statement or waste time waiting! **Just start writing and editing multiple drafts!**

Keep the structure of essay in mind and draft your essay accordingly. The introduction, body and conclusion should stick to the essay outline format as described above. Explain each idea effectively and precisely. Summarize your ideas and write a good concluding paragraph. Proofread your essay and add finishing touches to it.

Structure your essay -- focus each paragraph on one core idea with some ancillary thoughts that don't deviate from the essential core. Go through the ideas systematically.

In sum...

- **Ensure your essay has an introduction:** Give a hint to the reader what your essay is about and what they have in the offing. That will show your talent and ability to grip the reader's interest.
- **The topic:** Understand the topic properly. The topic you are going to write on should be something you are passionate about. Then make sure that you are going right with topic of your essay, the main theme from which you are not to move away.
- **Outline:** List the important points you want to include in your writing and plan the various sections. That will build you the structure of the essay.
- **Content:** Organize your knowledge: present it in a simple way so that the reader doesn't skip any part of it.
- **Clichés:** Clichés are basically words or phrases overused so often that they lose their meaning. So, avoid using clichés: such writing can become ordinary if not repetitive.
- **Don't waste your time:** Begin as soon as possible. Remember, you do not have much time to spend on just selecting the topic. Just read all the options you have and then start writing on one of them. Once you begin, the ideas will automatically flow through to help you. You will realize that multiple drafts will help you improve your essay considerably.
- **Present your ideas briefly:** Edit your drafts, and evaluate each and every sentence for its quality and throw out the rest.
- **Remember the ABCs of a good essay:** accuracy, brevity and clarity

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