

WelTec/Whitireia Writing Series

What is an essay?

An essay is an organized, formal piece of writing that discusses, analyses or evaluates a topic. To write a good essay you need to think carefully about a topic, research it thoroughly, then plan and write about what you have learned in a logical and coherent way.



Where to start?

Getting started on an essay can be the most difficult part! Follow the steps below to begin your essay.

1. Read the essay brief carefully

Check that you understand the meaning of every word in the brief. Look closely at the assignment marking guide so you know what points you must cover. Also, check the word limit.

2. Brainstorm.

Write down what you already know about the topic. Don't worry about whether your ideas are great at this stage – just get your thoughts flowing! Identify what information you need to complete your essay.

3. Research.

Gather, evaluate, and select information from appropriate sources. Check your course outline, Moodle page or speak to a librarian or learning advisor for ideas about where to gather your information. Make notes of useful and relevant ideas.

4. Make an outline.

Select the ideas you want to include in your essay. Group similar ideas together and consider the order you want to put them in. In point form, jot down what you plan to include in your introduction, each body paragraph and your conclusion.

5. Write!

Using your outline as a guide, write the full introduction, conclusion and body paragraphs of your essay.

6. Check referencing.

Check that you have used correct referencing in APA format.

7. Proofread.

Read over your work. Look for awkward phrasing, spelling mistakes and grammar errors.



How to structure your essay

Every essay must have an introduction, body and conclusion. Read your assignment brief to see any additional instructions.

Introduction

(5 – 10% of the word count)

- Provides relevant background information

Body

(80 – 90% of the word count)

- Develops your main ideas and research
- Describes and expands on main ideas
- Uses supporting details such as quotes or paraphrases as examples
- Uses your own words to explain your examples

Conclusion

(5 – 10% of the word count)

- Restates argument
- Summarises main ideas and makes final evaluative comments

Building Writing Skills

Look for the other handouts in the **WelTec Writing Series** to learn more about:

- Writing Introductions and Conclusions
- Writing Paragraphs
- APA Referencing
- Editing, Revising and Proofreading

WelTec Writing Series

Linking your ideas

Linking words are used to connect ideas when writing. They help your writing to flow from one idea to the next in a logical and cohesive way. When speaking we naturally use many different linking words for example *and*, *also* and *but*. However, when writing we tend to use more formal linking words such as *furthermore*, *in addition* and *in contrast*. Below is a list some of the linking words most commonly used in academic writing – try using some of them in your next essay or report.



To list....

First, second, third
Firstly, furthermore, finally
To begin
To conclude
Next



To generalise...

In general
Generally
As a rule
Usually



To show similarity....

Similarly
Likewise
In the same way
Equally



To show result/consequence...

Therefore
As a result
As a consequence
Consequently
Thus
For this/that reason



To show difference...

In contrast
Instead
Conversely



To show cause/reason...

For the reason that
In view of the fact that
Owing to the fact that
Due to



To give examples...

For example
For instance
That is



To summarise/conclude...

In conclusion
To conclude
In brief
To summarise
Overall



To add to an idea...

Furthermore
What is more
In addition