



Study Smart Essay Drafting Tool

Use this basic drafting template to help you write an essay. Write the separate parts of your essay in the boxes provided, then click COMBINE YOUR TEXT at the end so you can copy and paste it into your favourite word processing application.

Some essentials of writing essays

In almost all essays, you will be expected to write a thesis statement and develop an argument that supports the thesis.

A thesis statement is made up of a sentence or two where you clearly state: 1. the precise topic or issue you are writing about, 2. the position you take on that topic or issue. Your thesis may be your response to an issue, or it may be an answer to a specific question that you have been asked. Your position is based on your evaluation of the information about the topic. This is a form of 'critical thinking', also called 'being critical', and often, 'being original'.

When you are writing an essay, you:

1. Analyse and evaluate the existing information about the topic;
2. Establish your position – often, by answering a question, and often in response to the positions of others;
3. Present your position, and why you have taken the position. This is how you develop your argument.

Figure 1 (below) tells you more about these steps (adapted from Wingate, 2012).

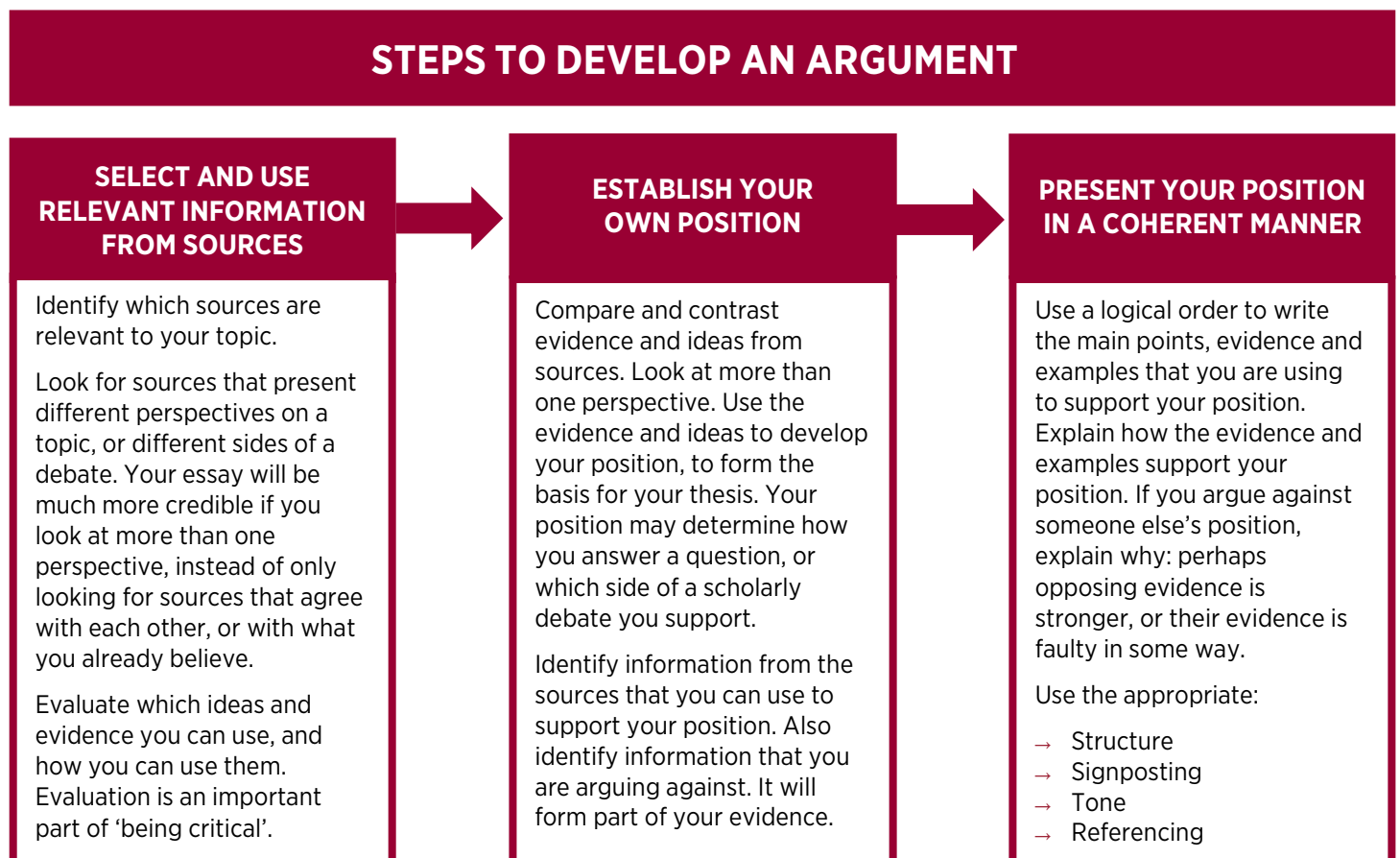


Figure 1. Developing an argument. This figure shows the main elements in argument development.

Your Essay Draft

Introduction

Introduction hint: Write your introduction both first *and* last. Write a basic draft first, to give you a plan for what to write about. Then write your body and conclusion. You may end up writing the essay slightly differently from what you thought when you started. At the end, revise your introduction if needed so that it matches up with your conclusions, and the order in which you write about main ideas in the body.

1. General statement (optional, depending on discipline and assignment instructions) – one or two sentences to inform the reader of the main topic of the essay, so that they understand what the essay is about in a broad sense.

2. Thesis – one or two sentences to state your position on the precise (narrowed-down) topic of the essay. A position is a value statement. Two common example thesis types are: 1. Giving a general but clear answer to a question that has been asked, 2. Responding to the positions that other writers have taken on the topic.

3. Outline – a sentence or two to describe the main points of the argument you are making in order to support your position. In an essay, it's not enough to take a position – you must explain why you take the position. This is called your 'argument'. In the box below, write the main points that you will write about (and support with evidence and examples) in order to develop an argument that supports your position. Write the main points in the same order that you plan to have them in the essay body. These will form the basis for your paragraphs.

Essay body

An essay body consists of a series of paragraphs in a logical order (one point leads logically to the next) that takes the reader step-by-step through your argument. In the body, you will:

1. State the main points you are making in your argument – one main point per paragraph.
2. Give supporting evidence and examples, and explain how the evidence and examples support your position. Evidence could come from books or articles (reference all information from your sources), while examples could illustrate the point you are making (reference your examples if they are not common knowledge). Your explanation is where you explain how the evidence and examples show that the point you are making is credible.
3. Explain how the main point of the paragraph is related to or helps to support your main position or claim (thesis).

Most essays you will write at university will contain 3-6 body paragraphs (depending on the length of essay and of paragraphs).

Paragraph length: There is no fixed 'rule' about length, as long as the paragraph contains all elements, which means it will always be more than one sentence. Very long paragraphs often contain more than one main idea and need to be split. Very short paragraphs may not contain enough explanation or evidence to support the main idea of the paragraph.

Body paragraph 1

1. Concisely state the main idea of the paragraph (topic sentence).

2. (Optional, if needed.) Write another sentence that explains more about the main idea.

3. Write sentences that support your main point by:

- Relating it to the **scholarly concepts** that you are using in your work. Define any important terms you use.
- Giving **examples** that help illustrate or demonstrate the paragraph's point. Support the point with relevant examples from research or scholarly literature. When you explain how the examples support the point, the example plus explanation is part of your **evidence**. Sometimes you may be asked to use examples from other sources, such as your experience or popular culture. Make sure that you check your assignment information about the kinds of evidence allowed in your essay.
- **Referencing** appropriately. Always reference any information you get from your sources.
- **Explaining** how the concepts and evidence relate to the main idea of the paragraph.

4. (Optional but often useful to strengthen your argument.) Write a concluding sentence that explains how the information in this paragraph relates back to or supports your thesis (the topic and your position on it, for the overall essay).

Body paragraph 2

1. Concisely state the main idea of the paragraph (topic sentence).

2. (Optional.) Write another sentence that explains more about the main idea.

3. Write sentences that support your main point by:

- Relating it to the **scholarly concepts** that you are using in your work. Define any important terms you use.
- Giving **examples** that help illustrate or demonstrate the paragraph's point. Support the point with relevant examples from research or scholarly literature. When you explain how the examples support the point, the example plus explanation is part of your **evidence**. Sometimes you may be asked to use examples from other sources, such as your experience or popular culture. Make sure that you check your assignment information about the kinds of evidence allowed in your essay.
- **Referencing** appropriately. Always reference any information you get from your sources.
- **Explaining** how the concepts and evidence relate to the main idea of the paragraph.

4. (Optional but often useful to strengthen your argument.) Write a concluding sentence that explains how the information in this paragraph relates back to or supports your thesis (the topic and your position on it, for the overall essay).

Body paragraph 3

1. Concisely state the main idea of the paragraph (topic sentence).

2. (Optional.) Write another sentence that explains more about the main idea.

3. Write sentences that support your main point by:

- Relating it to the **scholarly concepts** that you are using in your work. Define any important terms you use.
- Giving **examples** that help illustrate or demonstrate the paragraph's point. Support the point with relevant examples from research or scholarly literature. When you explain how the examples support the point, the example plus explanation is part of your **evidence**. Sometimes you may be asked to use examples from other sources, such as your experience or popular culture. Make sure that you check your assignment information about the kinds of evidence allowed in your essay.
- **Referencing** appropriately. Always reference any information you get from your sources.
- **Explaining** how the concepts and evidence relate to the main idea of the paragraph.

4. (Optional but often useful to strengthen your argument.) Write a concluding sentence that explains how the information in this paragraph relates back to or supports your thesis (the topic and your position on it, for the overall essay).

Body paragraph 4

1. Concisely state the main idea of the paragraph (topic sentence).

2. (Optional.) Write another sentence that explains more about the main idea.

3. Write sentences that support your main point by:

- Relating it to the **scholarly concepts** that you are using in your work. Define any important terms you use.

- Giving **examples** that help illustrate or demonstrate the paragraph's point. Support the point with relevant examples from research or scholarly literature. When you explain how the examples support the point, the example plus explanation is part of your **evidence**. Sometimes you may be asked to use examples from other sources, such as your experience or popular culture. Make sure that you check your assignment information about the kinds of evidence allowed in your essay.
- **Referencing** appropriately. Always reference any information you get from your sources.
- **Explaining** how the concepts and evidence relate to the main idea of the paragraph.

4. (Optional but often useful to strengthen your argument.) Write a concluding sentence that explains how the information in this paragraph relates back to or supports your thesis (the topic and your position on it, for the overall essay).

Body paragraph 5 (if needed)

1. Concisely state the main idea of the paragraph (topic sentence).

2. (Optional.) Write another sentence that explains more about the main idea.

3. Write sentences that support your main point by:

- Relating it to the **scholarly concepts** that you are using in your work. Define any important terms you use.
- Giving **examples** that help illustrate or demonstrate the paragraph's point. Support the point with relevant examples from research or scholarly literature. When you explain how the examples support the point, the example plus explanation is part of your **evidence**. Sometimes you may be asked to use examples from other sources, such as your experience or popular culture. Make sure that you check your assignment information about the kinds of evidence allowed in your essay.
- **Referencing** appropriately. Always reference any information you get from your sources.
- **Explaining** how the concepts and evidence relate to the main idea of the paragraph.

4. (Optional but often useful to strengthen your argument.) Write a concluding sentence that explains how the information in this paragraph relates back to or supports your thesis (the topic and your position on it, for the overall essay).

Body paragraph 6 (if needed)

1. Concisely state the main idea of the paragraph (topic sentence).

2. (Optional.) Write another sentence that explains more about the main idea.

3. Write sentences that support your main point by:

- Relating it to the **scholarly concepts** that you are using in your work. Define any important terms you use.
- Giving **examples** that help illustrate or demonstrate the paragraph's point. Support the point with relevant examples from research or scholarly literature. When you explain how the examples support the point, the example plus explanation is part of your **evidence**. Sometimes you may be asked to use examples from other sources, such as your experience or popular culture. Make sure that you check your assignment information about the kinds of evidence allowed in your essay.
- **Referencing** appropriately. Always reference any information you get from your sources.
- **Explaining** how the concepts and evidence relate to the main idea of the paragraph.

4. (Optional but often useful to strengthen your argument.) Write a concluding sentence that explains how the information in this paragraph relates back to or supports your thesis (the topic and your position on it, for the overall essay).

Conclusion

1. Summarise the main points that you made in the body of the essay, in the same order as you made them. Use different words from the words in your introduction, except for specialised or technical terms.

2. Restate your thesis (in different words from your introduction), and explain how the main points relate to each other and to your main thesis. In your explanation, you will be showing that your thesis is credible (that the reader should agree with you). TIP: Don't write something like "My thesis is credible because ..." Instead, you show how your main points lead to your position, by using appropriate linking words and phrases. See an example essay conclusion in the Study Smart information sheet "**Essay Structure**". (You will see in the example that the exact order of conclusion elements may be varied depending on the purpose, but conclusions should contain all the elements.)

3. Your essay conclusion should end with a strong message that your reader will remember. Finish it on a strong point. Your reader should know why what you have said is important. Look in your assignment information for information about what to demonstrate with your conclusion. Some examples of what might be used to finish a conclusion are:

- How it affects the broader topic or context,
- The impact it has/has had on the field or on society,
- What more needs to be known.

Before finishing

Go back and revise your introduction if you need to, so that it matches the order of the main points you make in the body, and so that you are writing the same thesis in both introduction and conclusion.

Combine your text

Click the COMBINE YOUR TEXT button to combine your text into the next box. Read through it. If you want to make changes, either edit your text in this drafting tool, or copy the text and paste it into your favourite word-processing app for editing.

COMBINE YOUR TEXT

References

Wingate, U. (2012). 'Argument!' helping students understand what essay writing is about. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11(2), 145-154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.11.001>