

Essay Writing Tutorial

What is an Essay?

An essay is a piece of writing that organizes ideas into a supported and structured explanation or argument. It differs from a story, a reflection or an informal piece of opinion writing as it requires a specific structure.

Essays vary in length from one page to more than twenty pages! Mastering the structure of a simple essay will enable you to structure a much longer, and more complex essay in the future.

TYPES OF ESSAYS

There are many types of essays. Each has a unique purpose. Here are five of the most common type of essays.

1. **Expository Essay:** introduces the reader to a body of knowledge or explains something
2. **Comparison and Contrast Essay:** demonstrates the similarities and differences between two things
3. **Persuasive Essay/Argumentative Essay:** makes a claim, or takes a position and supports the claim with reasoning, statistics, expert opinions and other evidence in an attempt to convince the reader that the claim is correct
4. **Informal or Narrative Essays:** informal essays are often narratives, which tell a story. The difference between '*a narrative*' and '*a narrative essay*' is that the purpose of a narrative essay is to convey some point, lesson or idea, and it is structured as an essay.
5. **Research Essay:** synthesizes information from multiple sources of information and offers some analysis of the subject matter. In order to accomplish this style, you will need to collect multiple sources of information, take point-form notes that summarize the ideas (this prevents plagiarism) and to synthesize the information into a cohesive paper that presents the information in an organized format.

THE THESIS:

Your thesis is a sentence that tells the reader the main points your paper covers and in what order they appear. It is your entire paper squeezed in 1-2 sentences at the end of the introduction.

- the thesis is your distinct standpoint on the subject
- it is a brief summary of the main points of your argument
- it is a roadmap for the paper.

The thesis statement must be specific and it makes an assertion--it must show your reader what the paper is about (expressing one main idea--and bringing in your supporting points) and it is typically written in one-sentence.

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Hint: a great many clear and engaging thesis statements contain words like *because, since, so, although, unless, and however*.

A strong thesis is disputable (some readers can disagree), it is focused (not too broad), it is relevant (readers won't say "so what?").

Formula for a thesis: Main claim (your specific standpoint) +argument #1 (to be provided in body paragraph #1) +argument #2 (to be provided in body paragraph #2) and argument #3 (to be provided in body paragraph #3)