

Writing an Effective Essay

Paper/Essay Layout (*Structure*):

Introduction:

Remember the introduction's job: to hook your reader's interest. Some ways to do this include telling a brief and interesting story related to your main idea, using some startling facts or statistics, opening with a quotation, or using a rhetorical question. Your introduction is your place to make your claim. It is where you can make some assertions that show what you plan to explore and prove.

Most importantly, your introduction needs to end with a strong thesis statement that outlines the structure of the paper. A [*thesis statement*](#) is the main idea of your essay. The main idea of your essay will emerge as you consider your audience, purpose, and occasion while actively reading credible sources about which you will write. In this one-to-two sentence statement, provide your audience a blueprint for the main points of your paper. You do not want to write definitive statements in your introduction such as "All leaders support diversity training." Use "Often leaders..." or "Many leaders." You don't know that "All leaders support diversity training. Rather your job is to make a claim that will explore something unique about leaders. For example, Savvy leaders support diversity training to improve research and development. The subject then moves from the leader to the idea of supporting an essential function of an organization with diversity training being one component of the thing that "savvy leaders" do.

If writing in response to an assignment, your thesis should directly incorporate the main issues of the assignment. It is good practice to refer to the assignment description and rubric to make sure that you address what is being asked. **Check out these examples of how to write an introduction at:**
<http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/intro.html>

Main Body:

The body (the middle) of your paper must follow the focus of the assignment as outlined in the thesis statement. Here is where you will express ideas supported by credible sources, such as the course readings and scholarly research (which you will cite in APA format, see the *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements* in CSU-Global Library). If your main points directly relate to your thesis, which strongly supports the objective of the assignment, you are well on your way (see the Critical Thinking section below).

One strategy to ensure that your paper directly follows the assignment is to break the directions down into individual sentences, formulate topic/heading phrases, and use those as headings in your paper. This way you will be assured that you have not missed any part of the assignment. In addition, it is absolutely critical that you ALWAYS review the assignment rubric that will be used to grade your assignment. Be sure to include all of the elements in the rubric that align with the grade that you hope to achieve.

You will need to make sure, as well, that you have appropriate transitions between the various ideas in the body of the paper. Words like "first", "then", and "finally" are good ways to help the reader move from one idea to the next. As a cautionary note, do not overuse transitional words. Use them sparingly to denote transitions between main ideas. **Check out this link for examples of transitions** - <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/transitions.htm>

Be selective in your word choice. This will take some practice and will come with time and experience. Reread your work and replace words that are imprecise or not "strong" enough to make the point that you are trying to make. **Check out this website that can help you with paragraph structure** - <http://klivingston.tripod.com/essay/body.html>

EXAMPLE: Check out this link for a good example of an outline - http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/brainstorm_outline.htm

Trees can be used for landscaping.

- A. Some trees are best suited for cold climates.
 - i. Evergreens are hardy and provide year-round color.
 - ii. Maples hold up well and provide brilliant seasonal color.
- B. Some trees are best suited for warm climates.
 - i. Additional information regarding Supporting Detail B
 - ii. Additional information regarding Supporting Detail B

I. Main Body Point #2

- A. Supporting Detail for Main Body Point #2
 - i. Additional information regarding Supporting Detail A
 - ii. Additional information...
- B. Supporting Detail for Main Body Point #2
 - i. Additional information regarding Supporting Detail B
 - ii. Additional information...

II. Main Body Point #3

- A. Supporting Detail for Main Body Point #3
 - i. Additional information regarding Supporting Detail A
 - ii. Additional information...
- B. Supporting Detail for Main Body Point #3
 - i. Additional information regarding Supporting Detail B
 - ii. Additional information...

Conclusion:

The conclusion (the end) is a very important piece of your writing. Too often students pay little or no attention to the conclusion, and the reader is "let down" by the conclusion after reading a very good paper. It is easy for a writer to let up after the main writing effort is complete, but the conclusion is your opportunity to make your main ideas "pop" and to prove the thesis/claim you made in your introduction. Your conclusion is your chance to round out your claims and exhibit to your reader that you are thinking critically about the topic you chose to explore and that you have provided sufficient evidence to prove your main point.

In the conclusion, recap the main points of your paper, emphasizing themes to demonstrate that you have thoroughly met the requirements of the assignment. *Remember, you should not include anything in the conclusion that you have not previously addressed in the body of the paper.* You might want to go beyond just restating your thesis statement and the highlights from the body of your paper to suggest further direction for the topic. Whatever you choose to include in your conclusion, be sure to make it relevant to the focus that you selected for the body of your paper. Then end on a clear statement that leaves the reader with a clear sense of your intent. Also – be sure to not introduce new points in your conclusion as this can leave your reader with questions rather than answers.

Conclusion

- A. Restate thesis
- B. Summarize main body points
- C. Return to hook to bring essay full-circle

Check out this link for a good example (and suggestions) of a conclusion - <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/endings.htm>

Critical Thinking (*Content*):

Critical thinking is a process that challenges an individual to use reflective, reasonable, rational thinking to gather, interpret and evaluate information in order to derive a judgement (Learning Centre, n.d., p. 4). It is this form of thinking that is necessary to truly LEARN. It is an ACTIVE process. **Be an active part of your education instead of simply doing the assignments.**

The following are some things you should consider when beginning to apply critical thinking skills to your coursework:

- **When using critical thinking in your assignments, have you presented whole argument?** Have you evaluated all sides of an issue; addressed all components of the assignment; written so that the reader not only understands your position but perhaps re-evaluates their own?
- **Look at both the positive and negative sides of an issue.** If possible, present both the positive and negative of an issue in your paper. Make sure there is credible material that supports of these views, otherwise it will be just your opinion. In academic writing, your opinion always needs to be supported with credible material.
- **Use other reliable sources to back-up your statements.** When you present an analysis of an issue, you need to back-up your opinions/statements with reliable and credible sources (Learning Centre, n.d.).

Using Credible Information/Research (*Support*):

- **Articles from well-established research publications** (*Scholarly/Peer Reviewed articles found in CSU-Global Library databases or Google Scholar*)
- **Specialized associations** (*List of associations can be found in the CSU-Global Library under the How to Find section*)
- **Interviews and personal correspondence from experts** in their fields
- **Nonfiction books and biographies** (*Academic and non-fiction eBooks can be found in the CSU-Global Library*)
- **Websites that are considered reliable** (*Use the CRAP test to determine reliability, C-is it current? R-is it relevant? A-who is the author? P-purpose?*)
- **Reference works** (*Statistical Abstracts of the United States, Almanacs, etc. can be found in the CSU-Global Library under the How to Find section*)
- **Academic and scientific videotapes, or documentaries** (*These type of videos can be found in the CSU-Global Library under the How to Find section*)

It is a good idea to check out the CSU-Global Library as you will be asked to use the Library for most of your assignments at CSU-Global. Do not hesitate to make an individual appointment with the Librarian (library@csuglobal.edu) to learn how to search for credible sources and how to cite in APA.

Avoiding Plagiarism and Citing in APA (*Giving Credit to Sources and Writing Ethically*):

- **When you use information from a particular source and you do not give credit to that source it is considered stealing and there are consequences for “stealing” someone’s information.** Even if you take an idea from a source and write it in your own words (summarizing, or paraphrasing); you still need to give the source credit.
- **Employers believe their employees should have a firm grasp on what plagiarism is and how to avoid plagiarizing.** Companies have low tolerance for plagiarism, in part, to the fact that the company's reputation is on the line when plagiarism occurs. Penalties for plagiarism range from a temporary leave of absence without pay to losing the job completely (Greenleaf, 2010, para. 4). You definitely do not want to put your academic and/or professional reputation at risk.
- **For more information on citing sources in APA,** see the *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements*. All students are expected to use this Guide for all of their assignments at CSU-Global unless otherwise indicated in the course syllabus.

References:

Greenleaf, J. (2010). *What is the penalty for plagiarism?* Retrieved from http://www.ehow.com/about_5371475_penalty-plagiarism.html

Learning Centre. (n.d.). *Learning to learn: Developing critical thinking skills*. Retrieved from http://sydney.edu.au/stuserv/documents/learning_centre/critical.pdf

Sebranek, P., & Meyer, V. (1985). *Basic English revisited* (5th ed.). Burlington, WI: Basic English Revisited. (Examples used for Main Body outline)