



Writing Center

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PLANNING AN ESSAY

Planning an essay is the single most important step you can take to ensure that you produce a coherent, complete paper. Following the steps below will help you determine how your essay should flow so that it is most readable.

The Introduction: The function of the Introduction is to introduce your topic to your readers, to catch their attention, and to establish your own "voice" and reputation. (In other words, who are you to be writing about this topic? What are your credentials, or where did you get your expertise that "allows" you to address this particular issue? Your answer will most often reflect your own study of the topic and the voices of published authors who are respected authorities in the field.)

Your Introduction Notes: _____

The Thesis Sentence: The thesis sentence is what "controls" and "defines" your essay. By creating a detailed enough thesis sentence, you can determine what to include and what not to include in your paper. Your thesis sentence should have a well-stated claim and some brief mention of support for your claim. An example might be, "With this new perspective, students are now able to investigate the Black Death's manifold effects: demographic, economic, psychological, moral, and religious."

Your Thesis Sentence: _____

The Body Paragraphs:

In the body paragraphs, you will lay the groundwork for your discussion of your topic and provide the supporting evidence that backs up the claim you made in the introduction and thesis sentence. Your body paragraphs will present the information in the same order that you used in your thesis sentence; for example, using the above example, your first body paragraph would discuss the demographic effects, the second would discuss the economic effects, the third the psychological effects, and so on. You can have as many body paragraphs as you need to thoroughly discuss each part of your topic. You may often use body paragraphs to further expand on issues you brought up in a previous paragraph. You may also use them to respond to or to refute opposing viewpoints.

Your Body Paragraph Notes:

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

The Conclusion: The conclusion serves a number of purposes. The first is to indicate to your reader that you have said all that you had to say. This is done by a brief recapping of your thesis sentence (in different words than you used in your thesis sentence though) and any other especially important points that you have made. The next purpose is to make one last plea for your reader's consideration, using either an emotional (be subtle!) appeal, or by either attacking or calling into question the opposing viewpoint. You may also question the character or the reputation of the opposition. (Remember, however, that no one likes people who call others names! Be discreet.) The last thing is that your conclusion should include a "call to action." In other words, what or how do you want your reader to do, think, or feel as a result of your essay? Tell them in a subtle way.

Your Conclusion Notes: _____

Additional Invention Notes: