

Structuring Your Essay



Writing an essay is like building a house. Essays and houses need structure. If you wanted to build a house, would you start with painting? Would you build it from one side to the other, from the front door to the back door? NO! Houses need **structure: a foundation, beams, posts, walls, and a roof.**

Writing an essay works the same way!
So what are the beams and posts of writing?

The Thesis Statement and Topic Sentences

Thesis Statement: The thesis statement is critical for essays. It is the main point of the essay; it gets the audience ready to read the paper. It's a good idea to put the thesis at the end of the introductory paragraph, and it should basically state what you will be arguing in the essay. It should be able to answer these questions:

- What are you going to talk about?
- What is your argument?

Be specific!

Topic Sentences: The topic sentences in an essay carry the argument along. They act like mini thesis statements for nearly every body paragraph. They relate back to the thesis statement and support its argument.

- Here's a helpful trick. Write out the thesis statement and topic sentences. If they are put together, they should form a mini essay that lays out your whole argument.

So this is the infrastructure of the paper. The entire essay rests on the thesis and topic sentences. Without them, the paper would fall apart like a house of cards!

Once the structure is in place, fill it out with the introduction, body, and conclusion.

- The **introduction** gets the audience ready to read. It should grab the audience's attention and begin discussing the topic. The thesis statement usually belongs here.
- The **body** is full of information that backs up the thesis. Each paragraph should bring up a new idea that gives new evidence that supports the thesis. The paragraphs should start with a **topic sentence**. The rest of the paragraph brings up evidence to support it.
- The **conclusion** summarizes the essay and brings the reader back to the thesis. This paragraph is different from the other ones because it doesn't bring up new information. Instead, it shows the reader why the argument and information that you've written is important for them. It should answer the question, "So what?"

See, writing an essay is easy; get your structure in place and you're on your way to a great paper. Happy writing!

“How to Write an Essay Like a Pro”

- I. *Prompt*
 - A. Read more than once
 - B. Identify the components of the prompt and the purpose of the assignment
 - C. Highlight/Underline key terms
 - D. Rewrite the main question as a statement in your own words

- II. *Prewriting*
 - A. List several ideas
 - B. Freewrite
 - C. Choose the idea that most interests you
 - D. Cluster
 - E. Outline

- III. *Drafting*
 - A. Create a working thesis and thesis statement
 - B. Change your outline if needed
 - C. Don't worry about grammar or syntax; just get your ideas on paper
 - D. Give yourself time to write, but don't expect to write the paper in one sitting

- IV. *Revising*
 - A. Share your draft with another reader
 - B. Wait a couple of days before reading over your own printed copy
 - C. Make global changes as needed (content)
 - D. Make local changes as needed (sentence structure and academic language)
 - E. Add details where needed (Hamburger)
 - F. Check to see if you are making sense
 - G. Check to see if you're following your thesis; if not, make changes

- V. *Proofreading*
 - A. Edit for grammatical errors
 - B. Check for misspellings
 - C. Be sure your paper is formal
 - D. Check one last time to be sure you have met all requirements of the prompt

- VI. *Publishing*
 - A. Create a final copy
 - B. Create a title, if you haven't already
 - C. Share one last time

Come to the TLC (SEC 401) at any stage of the writing process.

760-744-1150 ext. 8563

<https://www2.palomar.edu/pages/tlc-ranchobernardo/>

The Teaching and Learning Center - The Rancho Bernardo Center