



General Academic Essay Outline

Use this handout as a guide for the general outline of an academic essay.

Intro

This is your first paragraph.

1. Hook

This is a statement to grab your reader's attention—like a quote or interesting fact about the topic of the paper.

2. Background information

Introduce the topic and your argument. What does the reader need to know before diving into your paper? Everything mentioned in your topic sentences should be mentioned here.

3. Thesis statement

This is the last sentence in your introduction. It is a narrow and focused thought. It is your opinion, or the lesson you want your reader to learn from your paper. It expresses your claim about the topic and the supporting points for your claim.

- Claim
 - Supporting point #1
 - Supporting point #2
 - Supporting point #3
 - Additional supporting points as needed

Body Paragraphs

Your body paragraphs are narrow and focused. Each body paragraph corresponds with a supporting point from your thesis statement. Use MEAL to develop your paragraphs; see our handout *Is Your Paragraph a Complete MEAL?* for more information.

1. Body Paragraph #1 = supporting point #1

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- a. Main idea**
- b. Evidence**
- c. Analyze the evidence**
- d. Link to your thesis or link to next paragraph**

2. Body Paragraph #2 = supporting point #2

- a. Main idea**
- b. Evidence**
- c. Analyze the evidence**
- d. Link to your thesis or link to next paragraph**

Body Paragraph #3 = supporting point #3

- a. Main idea**
- b. Evidence**
- c. Analyze the evidence**
- d. Link to your thesis or link to next paragraph**

Many body paragraphs in argument papers need more than a single point of evidence to support each main idea. Repeat this pattern as many times as it takes to provide your reader with all the information they need, to persuade your reader of your position, to fit the requirements of your paper, and to support your argument.

Conclusion

Your conclusion should re-state your thesis, sum up the ideas you have explored, and put your thesis into a broader context or point your reader to next ideas. See our handout Writing an Effective Conclusion for more.

1. Summarize your argument

Everything mentioned in your topic sentences should be mentioned here.

2. Last Sentence

This should be a strong conclusion of relevance. Why is this paper important to the reader? To society? To the topic you covered?

General Academic Essay Outline

This is a basic outline. You will need to modify this outline for your specific paper to make sure that you are fully supporting all of your ideas and explaining all of your evidence

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