The Basics of Essay Writing

What does a good essay need?

An academic essay aims to persuade readers of an idea based on evidence.

- An academic essay should answer a question or task.
- It should have a thesis statement (answer to the question) and an argument.
- It should try to present or discuss something: develop a thesis via a set of closely related points by reasoning and evidence.
- An academic essay should include relevant examples, supporting evidence and information from academic texts or credible sources.

Basic steps in writing an essay

Although there are some basic steps to writing an assignment, essay writing is not a linear process. You might work through the different stages a number of times in the course of writing an essay. For example, you may go back to the reading and notetaking stage if you find another useful text, or perhaps to reread to locate specific information.

Possible steps (In no strict order)

- Analyse the question and define key terms
- Establish a possible thesis/point of view
- Research the topic. Use books, journals and other credible academic sources for support and evidence.
- Take notes from your readings.
- Write an essay plan and organise your ideas.
- Write a first draft to include your introduction, body and conclusion.
- Set the draft aside for a day or two, then re-read and make changes.
- Get some feedback - ask a friend/parent/colleague to read it.
Edit and redraft your essay.

Complete or finalise your references and citations.

Complete your final draft and hand it in.

See next: Getting Started