

The Academic Essay

This should not be as daunting and stuffy as it sounds, if only because the skills practiced when constructing an essay are those that you use all the time. Simply stated, an academic essay is the formation, presentation, and support of an opinion—in other words, an **argument**. And, as with anyone making an argument, you want to persuade others to accept your point of view.¹ In order to do that effectively, the argument must be presented in a way that is mature, professional, and convincing.

The General Components of an Essay

I. Introduction

- a. Simply (and redundantly), an introduction introduces the reader to the topic and subject under discussion. Again, there are a number of ways to attract the reader's attention.
- b. The introduction must always end with the **thesis statement**, a sentence or two that clearly and directly lays out the argument about to be made.
 - i. Thesis should always contain the Four Ss: **Subject, Stance, Support, Significance**

II. Body

- a. Each [body paragraph](#) examines one piece of evidence used to **support** the argument.
- b. Each body paragraph must start with a [transition](#) (linking it to the previous paragraph) and a [topic sentence](#), which states the main idea of the paragraph. That is, HOW does this example support your argument?

III. Conclusion

- a. The conclusion should never simply restate what has already been said. Instead, it should bring all the ideas together and answer the question, **so what?**
- b. The conclusion addresses the “**significance**” part of the thesis.

¹ Some arguments are more effective than others. There are a number of strategies for strengthening an argument; this is called [rhetoric](#).