



Essay Structure & MLA Style

Edmund Casey Hall 102
writingcentre@stu.ca
@writeatstu


STRUCTURING AN ESSAY

Basic Essay Structure

3 Parts

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

Introduction

- provides some background info on topic
- gives a reason or motivation for paper (i.e. why the topic is significant/worthy of study)
- starts more general, gradually gets more specific 
- ends in thesis statement, which
 - identifies the main point or topic of your essay
 - is a “map” or blueprint to the rest of your essay: it lists the ideas in the order they will be discussed in your essay

Sample Intro

Advances in digital technology led to the creation of ebooks in the late 1990s. By May 2011, retailers like Amazon were selling more ebooks than print books. It is not surprising that ebooks have become so popular given that ebooks have many advantages over print books. Ebooks are cheap and convenient, even though they have some technological drawbacks.

invention of ebooks

increased popularity of ebooks

advantages of ebooks

specific characteristics

Sample Thesis Statement

Ebooks are cheap and convenient, even though they have some technological drawbacks.

topic = ebooks

main ideas = (1) cheap (2) convenient

(3) technological drawbacks

Body Paragraphs

- discuss 1 main idea per body paragraph
- begin each paragraph with a topic sentence—a sentence that introduces the main idea
- for each new point in your paragraph, begin with a transition signal (e.g. first, second, finally, in addition, also, moreover, as a result, etc.)
- provide explanations, examples and details for each point you bring up
- add a concluding sentence at the end if the paragraph is longer and/or more complex

Body Paragraph #2 [Contains Supporting Sentences]

[topic sentence] Ebooks are convenient in several ways. [1st point] First, they are easy to purchase. [explanation] Customers do not have to travel to a bookstore to buy ebooks: they can purchase them online and download them in the comfort of their own home. Because online retailers carry an almost infinite selection of titles, customers also have a good chance of finding what they are looking for when shopping for ebooks online. [2nd point] Secondly, ebooks are easier to read than print books. [example] For instance, ereading devices like the Kindle weigh less than hardcover books, so they are more comfortable to hold for long periods of time. [example] Users can also adjust the brightness of the screen and the size of the font on their ereader: [explanation] this reduces eye strain and makes it easier for people with vision problems to read. [3rd point] In addition to being easy to read, ebooks are easy to publish. [explanation] Publishers no longer have to manufacture print books. If a publisher needs to make changes to an ebook, the publisher only has to update and distribute a new file instead of reprinting hundreds of copies of that book. [explanation] Furthermore, because ebooks are relatively easy to produce, authors can now publish their own work electronically instead of relying on traditional print publishers. [concluding sentence] In short, ebooks offer convenience for the buyer, reader, and publisher.

Body Paragraph #2 [Uses Transition Signals]

Ebooks are convenient in several ways. **First**, they are easy to purchase. Customers do not have to travel to a bookstore to buy ebooks: they can purchase them online and download them in the comfort of their own home. Because online retailers carry an almost infinite selection of titles, customers **also** have a good chance of finding what they are looking for when shopping for ebooks online. **Secondly**, ebooks are easier to read than print books. **For instance**, ereading devices like the Kindle weigh less than hardcover books, so they are more comfortable to hold for long periods of time. Users can **also** adjust the brightness of the screen and the size of the font on their ereader: this reduces eye strain and makes it easier for people with vision problems to read. **In addition** to being easy to read, ebooks are easy to publish. Publishers no longer have to manufacture print books. If a publisher needs to make changes to an ebook, the publisher only has to update and distribute a new file instead of reprinting hundreds of copies of that book. **Furthermore**, because ebooks are relatively easy to produce, authors can now publish their own work electronically instead of relying on traditional print publishers. **In short**, ebooks offer convenience for the buyer, reader, and publisher.

Conclusion

- restates main ideas in a new way
- usually shorter than the intro
- may begin with a concluding signal
e.g. In conclusion, To sum up, In short, etc.

Sample Conclusion

In conclusion, ebooks may have several limitations that come from their technical requirements, but they are nonetheless affordable and offer relative convenience.

Compare/Contrast Essays

- explaining similarities and/or differences between two things
 - e.g. How does pleasure as a political tool operate in *Julius Caesar* and *Brave New World*?
 - e.g. In what ways is friendship similar in *The Iliad* and *Epic of Gilgamesh*?
- thesis lists main similarities or differences discussed
- body uses block or point-by-point comparison

Compare/Contrast Essays

Question: e.g. In what ways is friendship similar in *The Iliad* and *Epic of Gilgamesh*?

Thesis: In both texts, friendship is formed through battle, and friends become like family; in addition, characters are willing to die for their friendship.

Compare/Contrast Essays

Body - Block Organization

- Iliad**
- Paragraph 1: *Iliad* – friendship formed through battle
 - Paragraph 2: *Iliad* – friends like family
 - Paragraph 3: *Iliad* – dying for friendship
- Gilgamesh**
- Paragraph 4: *Gilgamesh* – friendship formed through battle
 - Paragraph 5: *Gilgamesh* – friends like family
 - Paragraph 6: *Gilgamesh* – dying for friendship

Compare/Contrast Essays

Body – Point by Point

battle

Paragraph 1: *Iliad* – friendship formed through battle

Paragraph 2: *Gilgamesh* – friendship formed through battle

family

Paragraph 3: *Iliad* – friends like family

Paragraph 4: *Gilgamesh* – friends like family

dying

Paragraph 5: *Iliad* – dying for friendship

Paragraph 6: *Gilgamesh* – dying for friendship

Argumentative Essays

- not just explaining, but making an argument – i.e., adopting a position and using reasons and evidence to support it
- usually written in response to a controversial topic/claim
 - e.g. Which is preferable: a direct or indirect democracy?
Why?
- thesis indicates position, plus the main reasons you'll give in defense of that position

Argumentative Essays

Sample Thesis Statement

e.g. Direct democracy is preferable because [reason 1], [reason 2], and [reason 3].

CITING SOURCES

What is citing? Why do we cite?

citing = referring to your source

i.e. telling the reader where the words and information in your paper came from

How do we cite in MLA?

2 parts

- in-text citation
- works cited list

In-Text Citation

in-text citation = referring to sources inside your paper (i.e. not at the end)

- * **use in-text citation whenever you mention ideas, information, words or opinions from another source**

In-Text Citation

2 things to include:

1. last name of author(s)
2. page numbers (for quotations or specific facts)

In-Text Citation

e.g. Observers have noted that “trust in political institutions such as parliaments or the courts has precipitously declined across the established democracies of North America” (Fao and Munck 6).

e.g. Fao and Munck warn that “trust in political institutions such as parliaments or the courts has precipitously declined across the established democracies of North America” (6).

e.g. North Americans are losing trust in democratic institutions, such as the legal system and parliament (Fao and Munck 6).

Works Cited List

- starts on a new page (usually the last page)
- lists all sources you used
- contains complete publication information about each source

Core Elements in a Works Cited Entry

- Author.
- Title of Source.
- Title of Container(s).,
- Other contributors,
- Version,
- Number,
- Publisher,
- Publication date,
- Location.

Works Cited Entry

Books

Malcolmson, Patrick, et al. *The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada*. 6th ed., University of Toronto Press, 2016.

McMenemy, John. *The Language of Canadian Politics: A Guide to Important Terms and Concepts*. 4th ed., Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2006. EBSCO, https://login.proxy.hil.unb.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=155722&site=ehostlive&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_Cover.



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The Language of Canadian Politics : A Guide to Important Terms and Concepts

Authors: [McMenemy, John](#)

Publication Information: Ed.: 4th ed. Waterloo, Ont : WLU Press. 2006

Resource Type: eBook.

Categories: [POLITICAL SCIENCE / Political Process / General](#)

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Exercise

Aristotle. *Aristotle's Politics*. Translated by
Carnes Lord, 2nd ed., U of Chicago P, 2013.

Works Cited List

Journal Articles

Fao, Roberto Stefan, and Yascha Mounk. "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 27, no. 3, July 2016, pp. 5-17, <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Foa&Mounk-27-3.pdf>.

Exercise

Oliver, J. Eric, and Wendy M. Rahn. "Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism in the 2016 Election." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, September 2016, vol. 667, no. 1, pp. 189-206. *Sage Journals*, doi: 10.1177/0002716216662639.

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- Malcolmson, Patrick, et al. *The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada*. 6th ed., University of Toronto Press, 2016.
- McMenemy, John. *The Language of Canadian Politics: A Guide to Important Terms and Concepts*. 4th ed., Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2006. EBSCO, <https://login.proxy.hil.unb.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=155722&site=ehostlive&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=ppCover>.