

Step 1 – Choose a Topic

Choose the topic that interests you the most and where you think you will have the most to say. Make sure you do know some counter arguments as well.

Step 2 – Gather ideas

Collect your thoughts in two columns for both sides of the argument. If you haven't already, decide which side you want to argue.

(+) Nuclear power is a good energy source	(-) Nuclear power is not a good energy source
-	-
-	-
-	-

Step 3 - Organize

What is the purpose of each feature in the *Content* column? Choose from the following list and write in the *Purpose* column.

- to underline the writer's point of view and to look into the future
- to express important ideas
- to tell the reader what you intend to cover in this essay
- to introduce the reader to the topic – pro and con
- to remind the reader of the key ideas
- to support ideas with examples

Stage of essay	Content	Purpose
introduction	1 general statements	1
	2 scope of essay/thesis	2
body	3 Arguments	3
	4 Evidence	4
conclusion	5 Summary	5
	6 Relate arguments to a more general world view	6

The body of the essay will be divided into three paragraphs. **One paragraph = one main idea!** From the ideas gathered in step 2, you will find 3 arguments you want to work with. Either these are arguments from the side you have chosen to argue, in which case you will have supporting evidence for them, OR they are arguments from the other side, in which case you will find ways to refute (prove to be incorrect) or rebut (prove to be irrelevant) them using your evidence. You will end up with a **5-paragraph essay**: introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and conclusion.

Based on the arguments you have collected you can now create your 5-paragraph outline along the lines of this example:

Don't Support Nuclear Energy!

I. Nuclear power is not a good energy source for the world.

II. Very expensive

A. Nuclear fuel is expensive

B. Nuclear power stations are expensive to build and operate

1. Cost of construction
2. Cost of training workers
3. Cost of safety features

III. Nuclear materials are not safe

A. Nuclear fuels are dangerous

1. Mining fuels produces radioactive gas
2. Working with radioactive fuels can harm workers

B. Nuclear waste products are dangerous

1. Very radioactive
2. Difficult to dispose of or store safely

IV. There is a great possibility of accidents

A. Nuclear power stations can fail

1. Three Mile Island, USA (1979)
2. Tarapur, India (1992)
3. Darlington, Canada (1992)

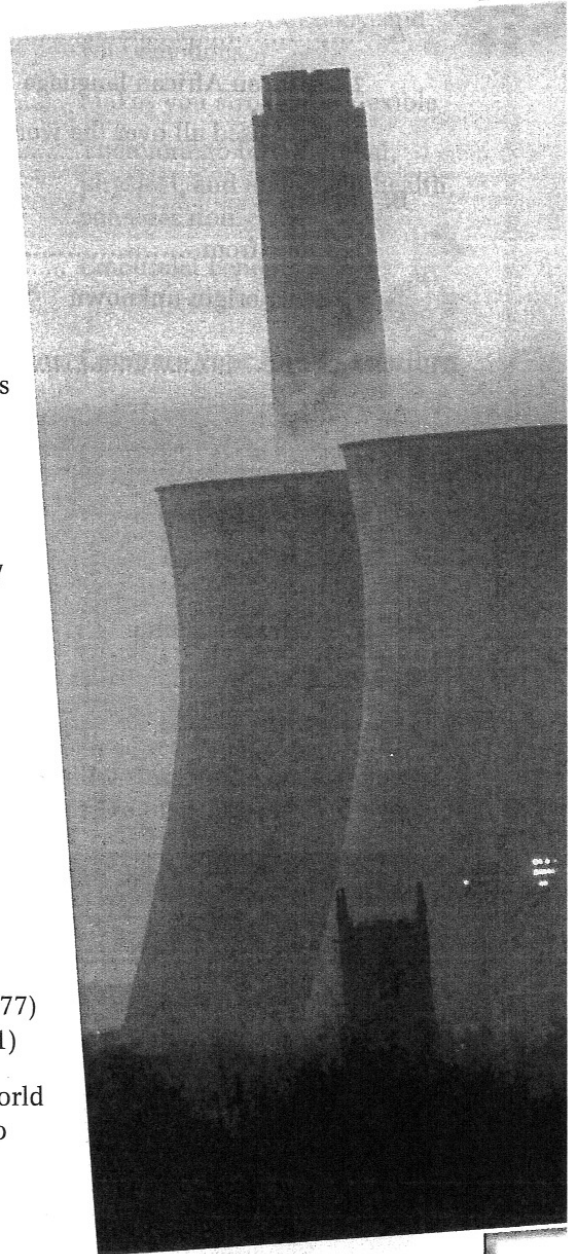
B. Workers can make mistakes

1. Chernobyl, USSR (1986)
2. Kola, Russia (1991)
3. Tokaimura, Japan (1999)

C. Natural disasters can occur

1. Earthquake: Kozloduy, Bulgaria (1977)
2. Tornado: Moruroa, the Pacific (1981)

V. Because of the cost and the danger, the world should develop different types of energy to replace nuclear power.



Step 4 – Write: Introduction

In order to vary your vocabulary, start out by underlining the key vocabulary in the essay question and writing words with the same or related meaning. This will save you a lot of time later on. It will also help to avoid repetition of words and will show that you understand the essay question.

Example 1 will show you how to do that and how to use that vocabulary to start your introduction.

Example 1: Space Exploration

1st: Read the essay question and underline key words

→ Should governments spend money on space exploration, or should they spend the money on problems here first?

2nd: Write down other words with similar meanings

<u>governments</u>	nations, countries, authorities, politicians
<u>spend</u>	allocate, give, allot, provide, budget, make available, waste, award
<u>money</u>	budgets, taxes, resources
<u>space exploration</u>	space program, trips to the moon/into outer space, the international space station, planets, planetary voyages
<u>problems</u>	concerns, issues, worries, disasters, threats, threatening, war, famine, poverty, education, homelessness, drugs, global warming
<u>here</u>	on earth, in our own countries, closer to home, in developing countries

3rd: Use your new words in the opening sentence

With many global concerns such as war, poverty, hunger, and pollution, many people question whether nations should waste money on trips into outer space.

4th: Add a thesis

In this essay I will discuss why the expenditure on space programs is absolutely justified.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is a sentence (or two) that states your opinion and what you are going to do in your essay. It usually comes at the end of the introduction.

- A thesis statement gives the author's opinion or states an important idea about the topic. It should give an idea that can be discussed and explained with supporting ideas.

The qualifications for getting into university in my country are unreasonable.

This is a strong thesis statement. It can be discussed and explained.

- A thesis statement should not be a sentence that only gives a fact about the topic:

In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer months are warmer than the winter months.

This is not a strong thesis statement. It cannot be discussed or argued about.

- A thesis statement should not state two sides of an argument equally:

There are advantages and disadvantages to using nuclear power.

This could be a topic sentence, but it is not a thesis statement. It gives two sides of an argument without giving a clear opinion of support or disagreement. It could be revised like this:

Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages and should not be a part of our country's energy plan.

This is a strong thesis statement. It clearly gives the writer's opinion about nuclear power.

Read these thesis statements below. Write ✓ (strong thesis statement), F (fact only—a weak thesis statement), or N (no clear opinion—a weak thesis statement).

- a. The top government official in my country is the prime minister.
- b. Some people prefer digital cameras, while others like traditional cameras.
- c. India became an independent country in 1947.
- d. To be a successful student, good study habits are more important than intelligence.
- e. There are several advantages of owning a car, but there are also many disadvantages.
- f. Half of the families in my country own a house.
- g. Using public transport would be one of the best ways to solve the traffic and pollution problems in cities around the world.
- h. While travelling, staying in a hotel offers more comfort, but sleeping in a tent is less expensive.
- i. Classical music concerts are very popular in my country.
- j. In order to create a successful advertisement, it is necessary to consider three issues: who should be targeted, where the advert should be placed, and what type of advert should be made.

How to develop a thesis statement

One way to develop a thesis statement for an essay is to write opinions you have about the topic. Begin, *I think that ...* and complete the sentence with your opinion. Then remove the *I think that ...* and the remaining words make a possible thesis statement.

Topic: diet / food

~~*I think that*~~ *a vegetarian diet is one of the best ways to live a healthy life.*

~~*I think that*~~ *governments should restrict the use of chemicals in agriculture and food production.*

After you have written several opinion statements, choose the one that would make the best thesis. Remember to decide if the sentence gives a clear opinion, states a fact, or presents two sides without a clear argument.

For each of these topics, write two or three opinions you have, starting with *I think that*.

a. exercise

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b. university study

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c. the Internet

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d. music

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In order to integrate your thesis statement into your essay, you might opt to also talk about the plan you have for this essay by preceding the thesis statement with

- In this essay I will ...
- This essay looks at ...
- This essay will discuss ...

Now go ahead and practice writing a first sentence and a thesis statement based on Example 2.

Example 2: Zoos

➔ Essay Question: Are zoos cruel to wild animals?

1st: Underline the key words

2nd: Write down the key words and add other words with similar or opposite meanings.

3rd: Use your new words in the opening sentence

4th: Add a thesis

A strong introduction...

- introduces the topic well
- states the thesis (the main idea) of the essay in a clear way
- is catchy and signals to the reader why the topic is interesting and relevant

An interesting fact of story or example or a thought-provoking quotation can help to make an introduction more appealing to the reader => this is called the "hook" (= Aufhänger)

Any of the following will make an introduction weak:

- It doesn't give enough information about the topic (not enough substance)
- It gives too much information (irrelevant details, information overload)
- It talks about too many different topics
- The main point and the direction of the essay is not clear

With these ideas in mind, flesh out your introduction about zoos with a few added sentences between your opening sentence and your thesis statement.

Step 4 – Write: Paragraphs

Besides the overall structure, paragraph structure is an important way of organizing your ideas. It is crucial for the quality of your essay because it is closely connected to how clear your ***line of thought*** is.

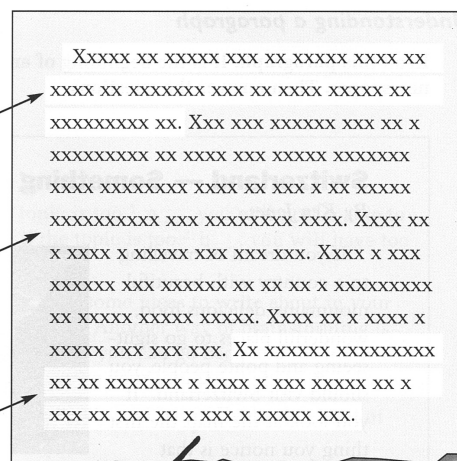
In general, a paragraph should be organized around/focused on ***one main controlling idea***.

Paragraph organisation

What makes a paragraph?

A paragraph has three basic parts:

- 1. The topic sentence.** This is the main idea of the paragraph. It is usually the first sentence of the paragraph, and it is the most general sentence of the paragraph.
- 2. The supporting sentences.** These are sentences that talk about or explain the topic sentence. They are more detailed ideas that follow the topic sentence.
- 3. The concluding sentence.** This may be found as the last sentence of a paragraph. It can finish a paragraph by repeating the main idea or just giving a final comment about the topic.



Put a tick (✓) next to the group of sentences that makes a good paragraph. Why are the other groups of sentences not good paragraphs?

a. ☐

My best friend has many different hobbies, such as skiing, cooking, and playing the piano, and she is very good at all of these activities. For example, she has played the piano for ten years and has won three piano competitions. She also likes to spend time travelling, and she has been to many different countries in the world. She grew up speaking Spanish and English, but now she can also speak French and Italian. I like my best friend very much.

b. ☐

Classes in literature are useful no matter what job you intend to have when you finish university. Books are about life. People who study literature learn the skill of reading carefully and understanding characters, situations, and relationships. This kind of understanding can be useful to teachers and business people alike. Literature classes also require a lot of writing, so they help students develop the skill of clear communication. Of course, a professional writer needs to have this skill, but it is an equally important skill for an engineer. Finally, reading literature helps develop an understanding of many different points of view. Reading a novel by a Russian author, for example, will help a reader learn more about Russian culture. For anyone whose job may bring them into contact with Russian colleagues, this insight can help encourage better cross-cultural understanding. Studying literature is studying life, so it is relevant to almost any job you can think of.

c. ☐

One good way to learn another language is to live in a country where that language is used. When you live in another country, the language is around you all the time, so you can learn to listen to and speak it more easily.

As you are writing, make sure you create a link between your individual sentences and between your paragraphs as well. Here is some vocabulary that might help you with that:

SENTENCE STARTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people think that... • It is claimed that... • Some people feel that... • It is a widespread belief that... • It is widely known/believed/accepted that...
ONE SENTENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While it is true that..., I believe... • Despite the fact that..., many people/I believe... • Although many people are convinced that..., I feel that... • Although it is often said that..., in fact the opposite is true.
TWO SENTENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is undoubtedly true that... . However, ... • It is often argued that... . However, ... • Some people say that... . They claim that... . However, I feel... • Supporters of this viewpoint say that... . However, I believe...
LISTING POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, Secondly, Thirdly, Finally, ... • First of all, ... • To begin with, ... • In the first place, ... • In addition, ... • Furthermore, ... • What is more, ... • Moreover, ... • Another point is ...
CONCLUDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conclusion, ... • To sum up, ... • All in all, ... • To conclude, ...

Step 4 – Write: Conclusion

The conclusion is the end of the essay and the part that the reader may remember most. It should be clear and avoid confusing the reader.

The reader expects the conclusion to do some or all of the following:

- rephrase the question
- summarize the main ideas
- give your opinion
- look to the future (say what will happen if the situation continues or changes)

The reader DOES NOT expect new information in the conclusion. Never add a new idea just because you have thought of it at the end!

The conclusion is very similar to the introduction. However, you should avoid repeating the same words. This is why a few minutes spent writing down synonyms and related words at the beginning is very helpful.

It might be tempting to think that you're done now, but the following two steps are crucial to the success of your essay!

Step 5 – Review Structure and Content

In this stage you will check your essay for its structure and content. You might look for places where you can add more information, and check to see if you have any unnecessary information.

You will ask yourself:

- Is the **overall structure** of the essay clear? Does it have an introduction, a main part, and a conclusion?
- Does my essay have a good and catchy **introduction**?
- Does it have a **conclusion** that wraps up the topic well?
- Are the **paragraphs** in themselves coherent?
- Are the different parts and individual paragraphs **linked** well?
- Is my **line of thought** clear and coherent?
- Are my **examples, illustrations and arguments** plausible and relevant?

Step 6 - Revise

Use your ideas from step 5 to rewrite your text, making improvements to the structure and content. You might need to explain something more clearly or add some details. You may even need to change your organization so that your text is more logical.

Proofread your text to check your spelling, grammar and vocabulary.

- Have I checked the essay for mistakes regarding **grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation**?
- Is the **vocabulary** used in the essay rich and varied enough?

Steps 5 and 6 may even be repeated several times until your text is as good as you can possibly make it. And voilà, now you are done!