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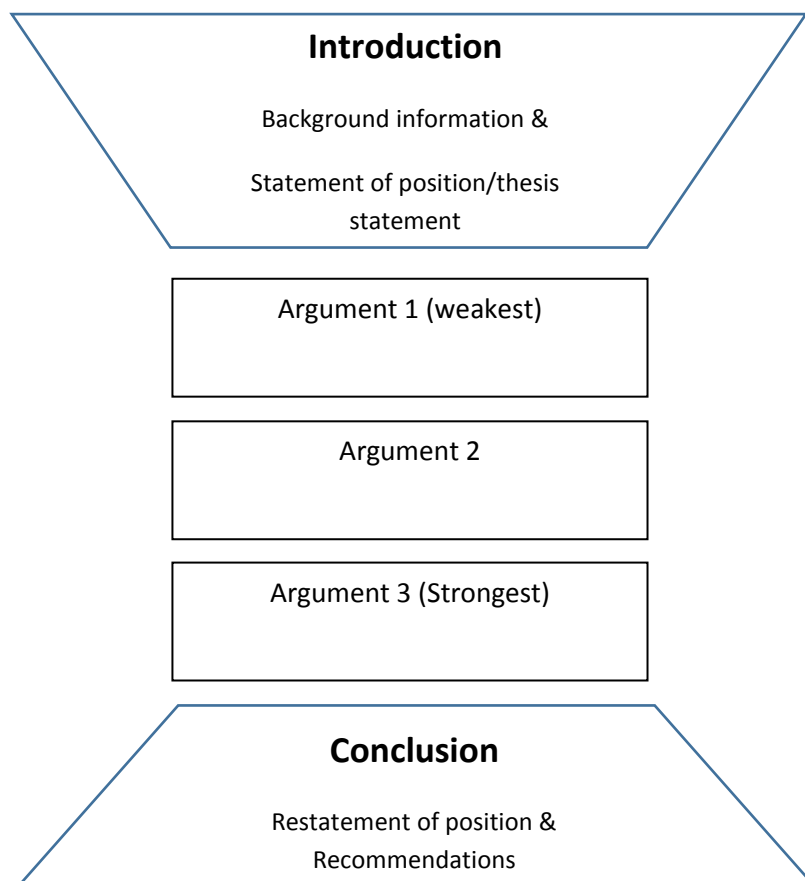
MOOC 4: Communication Skills for University Success

3.4c Basic Paragraph & Essay Structures

Essays

There are a number of different ways in which we can structure our essays beyond just this basic structure and they all rely on how we change the body of the essay. Below are a couple of different typical essay types. However, it is important to remember before we begin that the how you structure your essay will result from your particular rhetorical situation and your essay may not fit in any of these categories, or may be a combination of them.

Exposition essays are sometimes referred to as argument essays, position essays or persuasive essays. Their key focus is that they attempt to change the mind of the reader (Thomson & Droga, 2012). However, as we have already discussed, every text is an argument, so this structure is the most general of all of them.



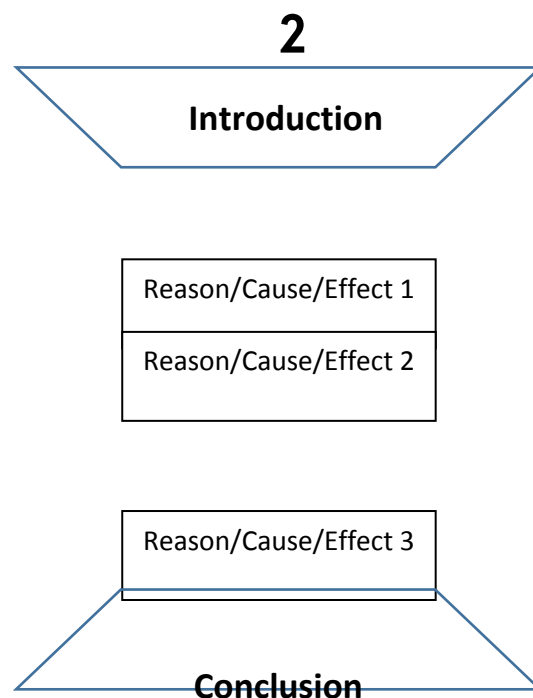
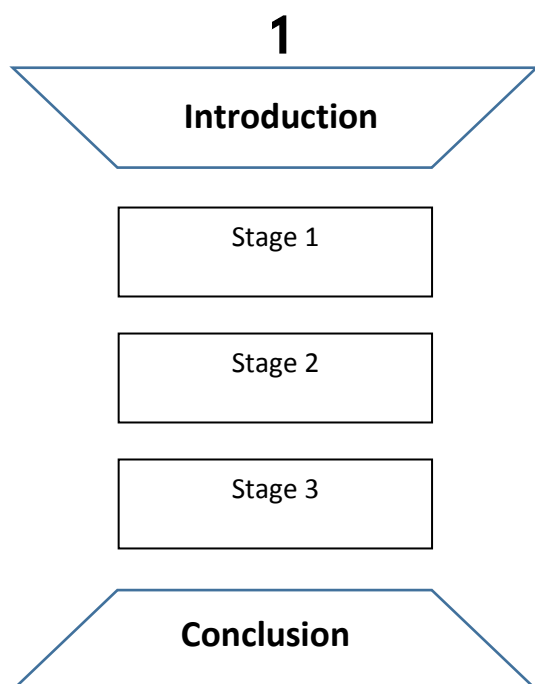
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Explanation essays are those that explain how things happen or why things happen. There are two main structures for these essays: those that are organised around time sequences and those that are organised around the factors or consequences. The latter types of essay are sometimes known as cause-and-effect essays. Of course, your essay may deal with just the causes, or just the effects, of a particular event or theory (Thomson & Droga, 2012).

HOW & WHY



Language features of explanation essays:

Usually written in the simple present tense (unless explaining the causes of a particular event in the past).

Needs to include the appropriate language, especially if writing a cause & effect essay. See the table below.

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The language of explanation essays (time, cause and effect)

accordingly	causes/caused/causing	leads/led/leading to
after	due to	meanwhile
and	during	results/resulted/resulting in
as	effects/effectuated/effecting	so
as a result	ending in/with	since
as a result of	finally	subsequently
as well as	first of all	therefore
at first	firstly/secondly/thirdly	then
at this/that point	for example	thus
at the same time	for this reason	to begin with
because	had/has the effect of	to conclude
because of	hence	until
before	indeed	when
but	if..., then...	when A happens, B happens.
consequently		

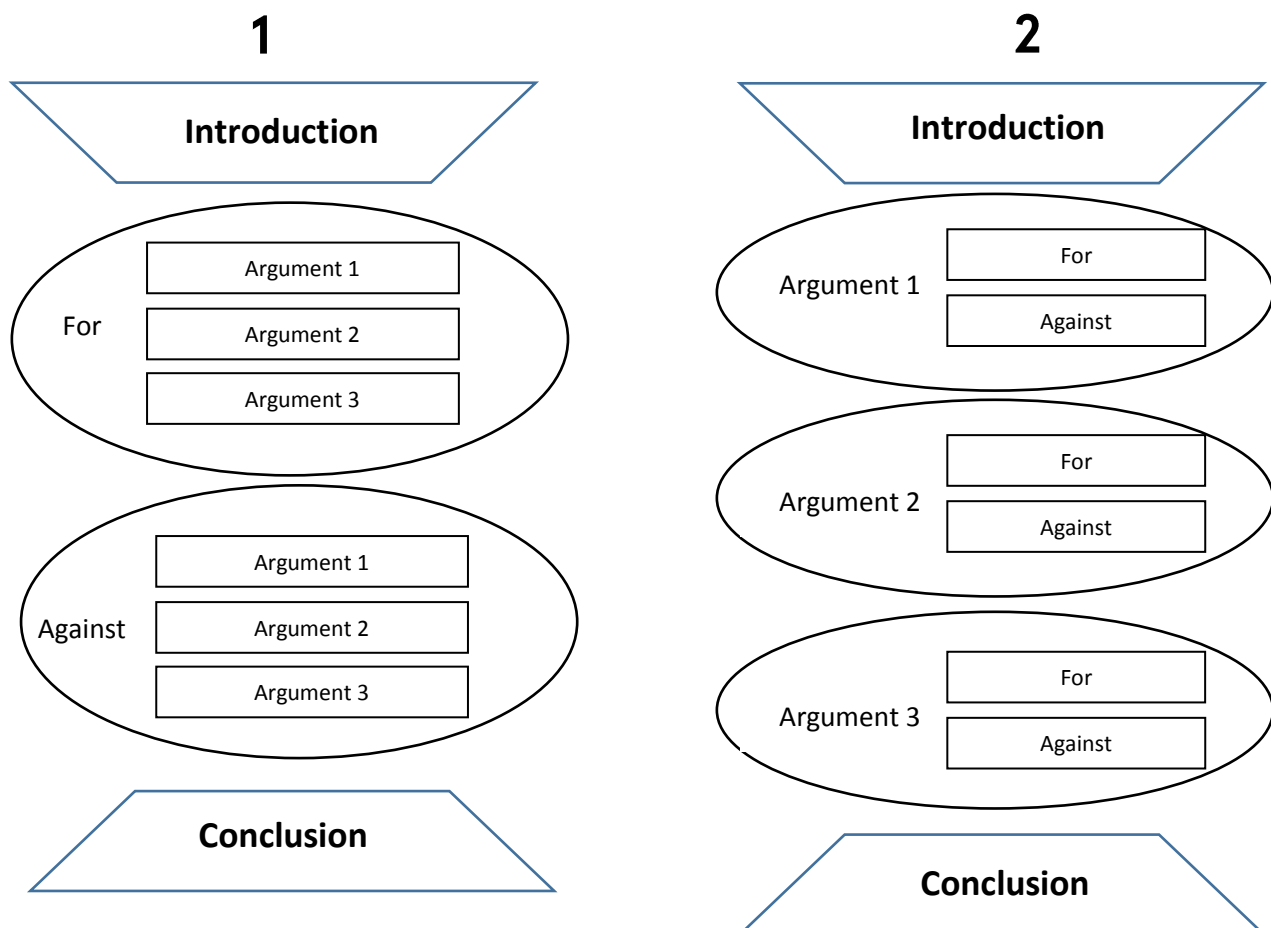
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Discussion essays present two sides of a topic, or two different topics, and discuss them. These essays might take the form of comparing ideas, theories or reasoning, they might ask for an analysis of the similarities and differences between two or more theories or approaches (LaVaque-Manty & LaVaque-Manty, 2013) or the benefits and drawbacks of a particular theory. Sometimes they might take the form of analysis and synthesis essays, where you break down two or more topics and relate them back to a larger, overarching structure. LaVaque-Manty et al give a Political Sciences example of an analytical discussion essay on how Marx and Durkheim, two social theorists, are both examples of structuralism.

There are two main versions of a discussion essay.



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The language of discussion essays

accordingly	finally	indeed
alternatively	first of all	likewise
although	firstly/secondly/thirdly	moreover
and	for example	nevertheless
apart from	for instance	on the contrary
as	furthermore	on the one hand
as well as	however	on the other hand
at this/that point	in addition	on the whole
at the same time	in a similar way	otherwise
because	in brief	similarly
besides	in conclusion	then again
but	in contrast	to illustrate this
consequently	in fact	to sum up
conversely	in summary	whereas
even though	in the same way	