**ENGLISH COURS M2 BA /BN/ PCPP**

**How to write an academic essay**

Writing an academic essay can be intimidating if you’ve never written one before or haven’t written one in a long time. By following the five steps listed below, you can develop a topic and write an essay without experiencing undue stress or anxiety.

How to write an academic essay

1. *Develop a topic*
2. *Research and take notes*
3. *Create an outline*
4. *Write your essay*
5. *Edit your work*

Develop a topic

The first step in academic essay writing is to determine your topic and develop a thesis statement, which is simply a concise statement of your essay’s main idea (for example, “Dogs are better than cats.”).

When you are given an assignment to write an academic essay, your instructor may give you a specific topic or ask you to write about a specific thesis statement. Sometimes, your instructor may ask you to write one of four specific types of essays:

* Narrative essays tell a story about something that happened in the author’s life.
* Descriptive essays are used to describe something, such as a location, person, or piece of art.
* Expository essays present information about a topic.
* Persuasive essays are used to make an argument or persuade the reader to feel a certain way or believe something specific.

If your instructor asked you to choose your own topic, think about what kinds of topics interest you. Are you a movie buff who has been asked to write a descriptive essay? Describe the way watching your favorite movie makes you feel. Have you been asked to write a narrative essay?

Think about an important experience, such as your most memorable vacation, and write a story about what happened during that vacation.

Research and take notes

Once you determine your thesis statement, it’s time to begin your research, if necessary. If you’re writing an essay describing a personal experience or your feelings about a certain topic, research may not be necessary. For other types of essays, though, it’s important to find information from reputable sources to bolster your argument or present accurate information.

When considering how to write an academic essay, don’t wait until the last minute to begin your research. You may find that the information you need isn’t readily accessible online, so you might need to visit your local library or conduct more in-depth searches online. The staff at your local public library or the library at your school are happy to help, but it’s never a good idea to go in the night before your essay is due expecting to quickly find all the information you need.

Find the right sources

When you’re searching for reputable sources, look for academic journals, newspapers, government or organizational websites, or websites written by someone with expertise and credentials in the topic you’re researching. In general, the information on wiki sites (including Wikipedia) isn’t trustworthy because anyone can change that information at any time. However, visiting the sources linked at the bottom of a wiki page is a great way to find reputable sources.

Once you’ve gathered your information, take notes of important dates, numbers, names, etc. so you have all the information you need on hand when you begin writing. You can also print out articles and webpages and highlight the important information to find it easily when you start writing.

It’s vital to write down or save the bibliographic information for all your sources, including websites. This information includes the author’s name, the title of the article or webpage, the page numbers (for printed material), the date on which the source was published, and the URL (for websites). When you write your essay, you will likely need to refer back to this information and include it at the end of your paper.

Create an outline

After you gather your research, think about how you want to organize it. A simple five-paragraph essay should begin with an introductory paragraph, include three paragraphs presenting information or arguments, and end with a concluding paragraph. If your essay is longer than five paragraphs, it should still begin with an introductory paragraph and end with a concluding paragraph.

Each paragraph in the body of the essay should focus on one separate idea. When you are creating your outline, you can arrange the ideas in these paragraphs in a number of ways, such as chronologically or from least important to most important. It’s important that the paragraphs flow from one to the next to form a cohesive essay.

Write your essay

Now that you have your outline, it’s time to flesh out the text and start writing your academic essay. Begin with your introduction. This paragraph should include your thesis statement and some general text explaining your thesis statement. This text can include background information for your argument, the context in which you have approached your examination of the thesis, and how the rest of your essay is organized.

The body paragraphs of your essay are where you present your arguments, descriptions, or ideas. Each of these paragraphs should begin with an introductory statement to let the reader know the main idea for that paragraph. The next 3–5 sentences should present further information related to that idea. This is where you will use the research you conducted earlier. You can present facts, statistics, or other people’s thoughts to back up the point you are making in each paragraph. If you use information or ideas you got from another source, though, you should always provide a citation to acknowledge that the information came from somewhere else; not doing so is plagiarism, and academic institutions have strict policies against plagiarism.

The style of these citations is usually determined by the style guide your instructor has asked you to use (e.g., [APA](http://www.apastyle.org/index.aspx), [MLA](https://www.mla.org/MLA-Style), or [Chicago](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)). The final sentence should provide a transition to the next paragraph (e.g., mentioning how the idea discussed in that paragraph relates or doesn’t relate to the idea discussed in the next paragraph).

Once you have completed your body paragraphs, it’s time to write your conclusion. In this paragraph, you should restate your thesis and summarize your ideas that support your thesis.

If you cited other sources in your essay, you should include a bibliography or works cited list at the end of your essay. Like the citations, the style used to present the references in this list is determined by the style guide your instructor wants you to use.

Edit your work

Once you have completed your first draft, it’s important to [edit your work](https://www.wordy.com/create-order). Academic essay writing almost always requires several revisions. When you edit your work, you will check for a number of different things, including the following:

1. *Make sure all your grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct (the spell check in your word processing software can help with this, but note that spell check doesn’t always catch everything!).*
2. *Try to avoid using passive voice (e.g., “I will be discussing”) where possible and use active voice (e.g., “I will discuss”) instead.*
3. *Use formal English, and avoid using slang or contractions.*
4. *Avoid using biased or sexist language.*
5. *Don’t be too long-winded; instead, be concise.*

In addition, make sure you haven’t presented any incorrect information (e.g., double check numerals in dates and numbers to make sure they are correct), and make sure you’ve provided citations for all information you obtained from other sources.

That’s it! By following these steps, you can write a well-thought-out, well-organized academic essay!