

An essay has **three main parts:**

1. Introduction (1 paragraph)
2. Main body (3+ paragraphs, depending on required length of essay)
3. Conclusion (1 paragraph)

Introduction: 5-10% of word count

- Interesting first sentence to engage attention of reader
- Introduce the topic with relevant background information/context
- define key terms, explain relevance of topic
- use the last sentence or two to explain how you will answer the question and to outline your main argument /idea

Main body: 80-90% of total word count

- divide the body into sections based on the topics in the assignment and the marking schedule
- divide each section into paragraphs. Each paragraph will deal with only **one main** idea
- each paragraph will open with a **topic sentence** which states the main idea of the paragraph
- the rest of each paragraph will expand on, clarify and provide evidence and examples which support the opening sentence
- each paragraph should end with a sentence which links it to the next paragraph

Conclusion: 5-10% of total word count

- first sentence should restate, in different words, the main argument or purpose of the essay
- summarise the main points, suggesting how the main ideas of your paragraphs link to the essay's argument and answer the question
- perhaps point out limitations of your study and suggest areas which need further research
- do NOT introduce any new material – ideas or evidence

References / Bibliography

- check whether your assignment requires a **bibliography** (all the sources you have used to get your information, even if you have not cited them in the essay) or a **reference list** (only those sources which you have cited)
- provide a list (in alphabetical order by author) of the sources, using APA Referencing style.

See also: Writing paragraphs

Adapted from:

Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology. Essay structure. Retrieved from http://library.cpit.ac.nz/learning_services/learning_and_study_resources/assessment_tasks/essay_structure, 10 May 2013.

NorthTec Tai Tokerau Wananga. Structuring your essay. Retrieved from http://lgdata.s3-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/1811/473150/Structuring_Your_Essay.pdf, 14 May 2013.