

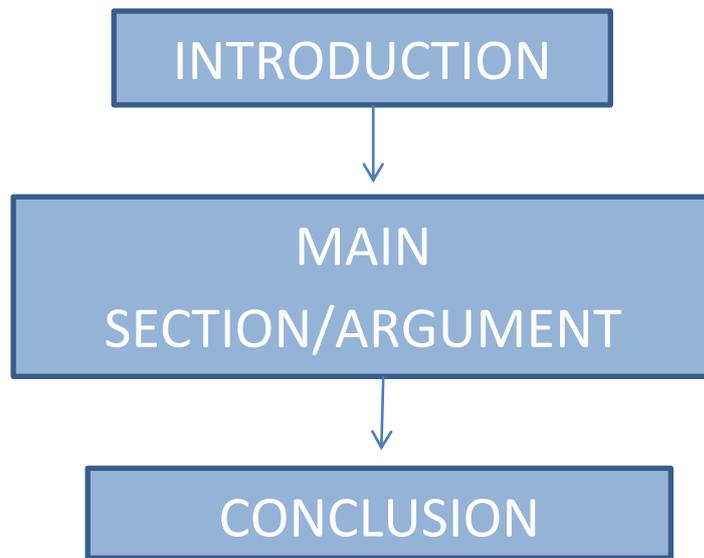


KINGS NORTON  
GIRLS' SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM

# STUDY SKILLS LEAFLET

## ESSAY WRITING

# Essay Structure



## INTRODUCTION:

An introduction provides your reader with an overview of what your essay will cover and what you want to say.

Essays introductions should:-

- Set the scene and arouse the reader's interest.
- Explain how you interpret the question/title.
- Briefly outline the issues you are going to explore in order and signpost how your argument will unfold.
- be between 5% and 10% of the total word count.

Some students prefer to write the introduction at an early stage, others save it for when they have almost completed the assignment. If you write it early, don't allow it to constrain what you want to write. It's a good idea to check and revise the introduction after the first draft.

## THE MAIN BODY OF YOUR ESSAY

The main body of your essay should present your case. Each main point should have its own paragraph. You should use evidence to support the arguments you make in this section, referencing your sources appropriately.

You can deal with the issues in a way that seems appropriate to you. You can choose to:-

- deal with all of the supporting and all of the challenging evidence separately.
- take each issue in turn, describing and evaluating it before moving on to the next issue.
- describe all the issues first before moving on to your evaluation of them.

How to order your arguments:

Although you will need to clearly describe the issues related to the essay title (e.g. concepts and theoretical positions), you are expected to go further than mere description. An essay question might expect you to take one of the following approaches.

- Make an argument by examining competing positions. This type of essay requires you to make a balanced and well-argued case for the strength of one position over another.
- Present an unbiased discussion. You might do this by comparing and contrasting things (such as comparing different text).
- Explain something in a reasoned way. To explore all the elements involved in a particular concept or theory in an even-handed way.

In all cases, you will be expected to:

- clearly describe what your essay is trying to do and define any essential terms.
- present an argument that is balanced.
- base any conclusions you draw on evidence.
- present evidence using references to the original published work.

## CONCLUSION

Your conclusion should sum up how your essay has answered the title. It should reinforce your introduction and include a reference to the wording of the title.

If your essay has presented evidence or data, ensure that the conclusions you draw are valid in the light of that evidence and data. Draw your conclusions cautiously: use phrases such as 'the evidence suggests that ...', or 'one interpretation is that ...' rather than 'this proves that ...'.

Your conclusion should

- summarise the key elements of your argument clearly and concisely
- demonstrate how you've answered the question
- perhaps suggest what needs to be considered in the future.

It should not

- include any new arguments ideas or examples
- be too long. For an assignment of fewer than 1,500 words a conclusion of 50-100 words is probably enough
- repeat examples, phrases or sentences from the main body of your essay.

## THE MAIN STAGES

- Analyse the question - Understanding what the essay question means and what it is asking you to do are important steps in the essay writing process. It is therefore important that you analyse the various elements within the essay question and highlight any key words and instructions.
- Make a rough outline plan
- Use the plan to guide research
- Review, revise and refine the plan
- Write the first draft
- Edit draft for structure and content
- Edit draft for style
- Check references and bibliography (is used)
- Proof read for spelling and punctuation

# SENTENCE STARTERS AND CONNECTIVES

Use these sentence starters and connectives to improve the quality of your writing

Listing Points	Firstly, Secondly, Finally, In the first place.... To begin with.... In addition to this... Furthermore, Not only...but also More importantly...	Comparing	Compared with... Similarly... Likewise... Equally... ...in comparison with... As with.... ...are similar in that... In the same way...
Emphasising	Mainly... Mostly... Usually... Most often...	Re-phrasing	In other words... That is.... To put it more simply...
Giving examples	For example, For instance, Such as... ...as can be seen... ...as is shown by... Take the case of... This can be proven by...	Contrasting	However, On the other hand... ...although... Despite this... On the contrary... Instead... ...whereas... ...while...
Changing topic	Turning to... As regards... With regard to... Concerning... Moving onto... Now to consider... In contrast...	Conceding	Although... While it is true that... In spite of... Despite this... However...yet... Still... Nevertheless...
Cause and Effect	...so... As a result of... ...because... This means that... Due to the fact that ....due to... ...caused by...	Summing up	In conclusion... In summary... Overall... To conclude... In brief... On the whole...

## KEY WORDS USED IN ESSAY TITLES

Here is a list of the most common keywords used in essay titles with an explanation for each.

**Account for** - requires an answer that gives the reasons for the subject of the question.

**Analyse** - requires an answer that takes apart an idea, concept or statement in order to consider all the factors it consists of. Answers of this type should be very methodical and logically organised.

**Compare** - requires an answer that sets items side by side and shows their similarities and differences. A balanced (fair, objective) answer is expected.

**Consider** - requires an answer in which the students describe and give their thoughts on the subject.

**Contrast** - requires an answer that points out only the differences between two items.

**Criticise** - requires an answer that points out mistakes or weaknesses, and that also indicates any favourable aspects of the subject of the question. It requires a balanced answer.

**Define** - requires an answer that explains the precise meaning of a concept. A definition answer will include a definition, probably expanded.

**Describe** - requires an answer that says what something is like, how it works and so on.

**Discuss** - requires an answer that explains an item or concept, and then gives details about it with supportive information, examples, points for and against, and explanations for the facts put forward. It is important to give both sides of an argument and come to a conclusion.

**Evaluate/Assess** - requires an answer that decides and explains how great, valuable or important something is. The judgement should be backed by a discussion of the evidence or reasoning involved.

**Explain** - requires an answer that offers a rather detailed and exact explanation of an idea or principle, or a set of reasons for a situation or attitude.

**Explore** - requires an answer that examines the subject thoroughly and considers it from a variety of viewpoints.

**Illustrate** - requires an answer that consists mainly of examples to demonstrate or prove the subject of the question. It is often added to another instruction.

**In relation to** – requires an answer that gives the reasons for the subject of the question.

**With/by reference to** – requires you to refer to a secondary source, a specific text or idea.

**Justify** - requires an answer that gives only the reasons for a position or argument. Answer the main objections likely to be made of them. Note, however, that the proposition to be argued may be a negative one (e.g. Justify the abolition of the death penalty.)

**Prove/Disprove** - both of these require answers that demonstrate the logical arguments and/or evidence connected with a proposition prove requires the 'pro' points, and disprove requires the 'contra' points.

**Role** – what part something plays, how it works, especially in co-operation with others.

**Significance** – requires you to explain why a certain aspect of a text, an idea or principle is particularly important.

**State** - requires an answer that expresses the relevant points briefly and clearly without lengthy discussion or minor details.

**Summarise/Outline** - requires an answer that contains a summary of all the available information about a subject, i.e. only the main points and not the details should be included. Questions of this type often require short answers.

**To what extent is X true?** - requires an answer that discusses and explains in what ways X is true and in what ways X is not true.

# ESSAY WRITING: WRITER'S CHECKLIST

## Introduction:

- Is the main idea/argument stated clearly?
- Is it clear what the main focus of the essay is?

## The Main Body Paragraphs:

- Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence that is related to the main idea of the essay?
- Does each paragraph include specific information about the essay subject or from a specific text (including quoted evidence from the text, which supports the topic sentence)?
- Is there a clear plan for the order of the paragraphs (i.e., order of importance, chronology in the story, etc.)?
- Does each paragraph transition smoothly to the next?
- Is there suitable use of sentence starters and connectives?

## Conclusion:

- Is the main idea of the essay restated in different words?
- Are the supporting ideas summarized succinctly and clearly?
- Is the concluding paragraph interesting? Does it leave an impression on the reader?

## Overall Essay:

- Is any important material left unsaid?
- Is any material repetitious and unnecessary?
- Are there changes needed in word choice, sentence length and structure, etc.?
- Are the quotations (if required) properly cited?
- Has the essay been proofread for spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.?