A BASIC GUIDE TO ESSAY STRUCTURE

An essay is written in paragraphs and has a basic structure which includes an introduction, body, conclusion and a list of references.

**Introduction** (5-10% of the essay) includes most, if not all, of the following:

- introduction to the topic
- brief comment on its importance
- statement of essay’s main argument or discussion of main issues
- statement of how you intend to answer your question

**Body of the essay** (80 -90% of the essay)

- includes all the main ideas
- topic sentences outline the main idea at the start of each paragraph
- develops your main ideas by explaining, illustrating, giving examples or reasons
- research is used to support statements
- a separate paragraph is used for each main idea
- linking words connect your ideas

**Useful linkers**

- **Additional ideas**: in addition, similarly, likewise, moreover, furthermore, also, besides
- **Certainty**: obviously, certainly, undoubtedly, of course
- **Example**: for instance, for example, to illustrate, in particular
- **Reason**: since, as, so, because of, due to, owing to, the reason why, in other words, leads to, cause
- **Consequence**: as a result, thus, so, therefore, consequently, thereby, eventually, in that case
- **Condition**: if, unless, whether, provided that
- **Contrast**: however, on the other hand, despite, in spite of, though, although, but, on the contrary, otherwise, yet, instead of, rather, whereas, nonetheless, alternatively

**Conclusion** (5 -10% of the essay)

- sums up your essay
- restates the main argument
- avoids introducing new ideas
- may outline future directions for further research needed
- uses words like: in conclusion, in summary, lastly, finally, to sum up, to conclude, in short

**List of References (or Bibliography)**

- lists all the resources you have used to get information for the essay
- follows the required referencing system
- usually a reference contains details of:
  Author’s surname, Initials. (Year of publication). Title, Place of publication, Publisher.
  e.g.
  
  Sydney: Macquarie.