

Guidelines for Essay Writing

1. Begin by choosing a topic that interests you (unless the specific topic is assigned) and that you know something about.
2. Brainstorm briefly for supporting ideas, an approach for the introduction, and organization of the paragraphs. Clustering, freewriting, and/or a brief outline can help.
3. Make sure the introduction has a clear thesis statement, located at the end of the first paragraph, to give the essay focus and direction.
4. Organize body paragraphs logically. Make sure each paragraph is closely related to the topic and discusses one major point or group of related points. Each body paragraph should have a topic sentence and sufficient supports related to it. The sentences in any paragraph should follow an orderly, logical sequence. Also, be sure that paragraphs do not overlap in content but have smooth transitions from one to the other.
5. Make sure the conclusion relates to the original thesis statement in a logical way. Avoid introducing new or off-topic ideas.
6. Read through the essay for relevance. Is the whole essay on the topic and in the mode required? Do body paragraphs support the thesis statement? Do paragraph supports relate to the topic sentence? Does the conclusion relate to the thesis statement?
7. Read the essay a second time for cohesion. Do the parts connect together well? Are there logical links between ideas? Are more or different transitions needed?
8. Read the essay a third time for parallelism. Are there awkward sentence constructions or missed points in a paragraph discussion? Are all items in each series listed in similar grammatical form?
9. Read the essay a fourth time for clarity and style. Are any sections unclear? Are there any vague pronouns, awkward or informal phrases, or excess wording? Does it sound professional and polished?
10. Read the essay a final time for mechanics, looking at grammar, spelling, punctuation, word forms, verb tense, and pronoun agreement.