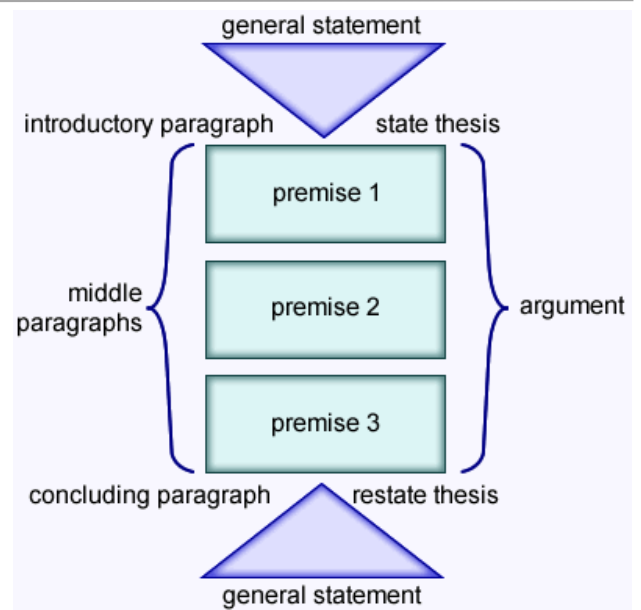




An academic essay is structured in the following format:

- an **introductory paragraph** that introduces the essay's thesis or 'big idea'
- **middle or body paragraphs** that support this thesis and convince the reader of its validity
- and a **concluding paragraph** that restates the thesis and draws together the threads of the argument presented in the essay.



Unlike in an essay written as an assignment, where you would write your body paragraphs first and your introduction and conclusion last, for an essay in a test situation you will firstly write your introduction; followed by your body paragraphs; and finally, your conclusion.

### Introduction:

Your introduction sets the scene for your essay, and what your argument or stance on the topic will be. This is where you include your thesis statement (usually as the concluding sentence) as well as briefly state the main points of your argument. These points will then become the main topics of your body paragraphs.



**Activity:** Try out **Activity One**, on the right-hand side of the page, to review examples of essay introductions.



### Body paragraphs:

Your body paragraphs contain the evidence and examples you will use to support your argument. This is where you make your case to the examiner, and aim to prove your point. For each paragraph you will have a "topic sentence" to **introduce** the paragraph topic; a sentence or two to **explain** it; another sentence or more to provide **examples** such as facts, quotes, and statistics, followed by a **concluding** or **linking** sentence to the next paragraph. Any facts or quotes you can call upon from your unit readings will strengthen your essay by providing credibility to your argument.



### Transition markers:

Transition markers are words or phrases used to link together the sentences and paragraphs of your essay. They give your writing coherence and help the examiner to follow the direction of your argument.

To view some examples of transition markers and how to use them in a sentence, see [Step five of the Better Essays program](#).



### Conclusion:

For your conclusion, you should restate your thesis and summarise the points of your argument presented throughout your essay. You should not introduce any new information in your conclusion, and should leave the examiner with a sense of completion.

### References:

In essays for assignments you will always be required to credit your sources wherever they are cited. For essays in test situations, however, it is often difficult to provide references as you don't have the unit material in front of you. Discuss with your tutor whether you are required to cite your sources in the essay exam, and what information you will need to include if so. If you are able to memorise some quotes or statistics, and who they are attributed to, this will strengthen your essay regardless of whether references are required or not.