

Essay Structure

This document is intended to provide you with a basic insight into essay structure, providing a step-by-step guide on how to structure the introduction, body and conclusion of general essays.

It is important to note that variances in structure may occur depending on what topic you are studying. Do not think of this as a static structure, but rather as a foundational guideline for you to build on and adapt to the requirements of each module.

Introduction:

1. Definition (optional) – This is where you can provide a personal ‘definition’ or interpretation of key words in the question. This **should not** be in the form of a conventional dictionary definition, but rather should be where you illustrate your understanding of key rubric concepts to help provide a segue into your answer.

2. Rephrase Question - It’s important to include part of/rephrase the question early in your introduction, so that it is clear to the marker that you are addressing the question asked. When you do this, don’t simply re-write the question verbatim, but rather make your interpretation of the question clear (see standpoint below).

3. Thesis Statement – Your thesis statement is your overall perspective and standpoint on the question asked. It is comprised of two main parts:

a.) **Standpoint** – whether you agree/disagree with the question asked. You should make this clear when you rephrase the question.

E.g. ‘discovery always comes at a price’ (agree), ‘discovery sometimes involves a price’ (fencesit), ‘discovery never comes at a price’ (disagree).

b.) **Justification** – a summation of WHY you agree/disagree. Should be original, insightful, and most importantly should clearly and directly answer the question that has been asked. Essentially, the justification allows you to get creative and demonstrate your detailed knowledge of a topic.

4. Introduce the Texts – State the texts you will be discussing within your essay. Should include title, author and medium, and where appropriate may also include the year of publication.

5. Outline your Points of Argument (POAs) – Your points of argument should derive from your thesis/question, and are meant to prove the point you are trying to make. Your points of argument form the basis of your body, as each paragraph should explicitly explore and expand on one of these sub-arguments.

6. Link back to the question (optional)- Depending on the length of your introduction, you may want to take this opportunity to link back to the question here to reinforce in the mind of the marker that you are addressing what has been asked.

Body:

There are three general ‘types’ of body paragraph structures that can be employed for different modules:

The ‘**general paragraph**’ structure is the most commonly used paragraph type in years 7-10. This structure may also be useful for a number of year 11 and 12 topics, including the area of study. However, this paragraph type is only suitable to discuss ONE text and ONE idea, and therefore needs to be paired with a ‘linking paragraph’ if you are undertaking a module that requires the discussion of more than one text.

The ‘**linking paragraph**’ structure, as suggested above, is employed when you are required to link the discussion of a second text to your core text (for example, linking a related text to your prescribed text in the area of study module). Generally, the ‘linking’ paragraph will explore the **same** point of argument as its preceding paragraph, thus enabling you to tie two texts together under the same idea.

The ‘**integrated paragraph**’ structure differs from the above two options, as this paragraph type enables you to discuss TWO texts in the ONE paragraph. While the structure of this paragraph is a little bit harder to perfect, it allows you to create clear, sophisticated and resolute links between two texts, and is the ideal option for any comparative module.

The different paragraph types are (generally) structured as follows:

General Paragraph Structure

- 1. Topic Sentence** – a one sentence summation of the overall ideas to be discussed in the paragraph. Your topic sentence should derive from **one** of your POAs and should link back to the thesis and/or question.
- 2. General Example** – one sentence where you provide an overall summation of the relevance of your POA to your text as a whole, demonstrating your breadth of knowledge.
- 3. Specific Example** – a very brief outline of a specific instance from your text that exemplifies the point you’re making. This should be used to provide context to your quote/technique, thus demonstrating your depth of knowledge.
- 4. Quote/Technique** – A quote from your text, supported by a technique, to provide textual evidence.
- 5. Expand** – expand on the quote and technique by discussing the overall *effect* of the quote/technique. This is a good opportunity to add sophistication to your essay through the level of analysis/evaluation included. It is important that you always link your expansion back to your point of argument, thesis, and/or question to ensure all components of your argument line are effectively explored and integrated.
- 6. Link** – link your text/point of argument back to the question.

Note: A strong essay should ALWAYS contain more than one quote/technique to support a point of argument. To include a second quote, repeat steps 3, 4 & 5 (i.e. specific example, quote/tech and expand) as these three facets will provide you with the proper amount of breadth and depth any example needs.

Linking Paragraph Structure

1. Topic Sentence – in a linking paragraph, the issue to be discussed is the same as in the previous paragraph, therefore instead of restating your previous topic sentence one should employ the use of a ‘linking’ word (e.g. similarly, likewise, correspondingly) as a means of linking the two paragraphs together.

E.g. Similarly, the text (title) also delves into (point of argument/link to question and/or thesis)

2. General Example – same as above

3. Specific Example – same as above

4. Quote/Technique – In a linking paragraph, this is a good opportunity to further link your two texts together by drawing a similarity between the type of quote/tech used by the authors.

E.g. Much like (text 1), (text 2) also employs the use of (technique) in order to illustrate...

5. Expand – expand on the quote and technique by discussing the overall *effect* of the quote/technique on the meaning conveyed. Once again, this provides a good opportunity to further link the two texts together by drawing on similarities/differences in meaning or the intended impact of the composer.

E.g. While (text 1) suggests (idea), (text 2) effectively extends this concept, thus allowing audiences deeping insight into (meaning)

6. Link – Link BOTH texts back to the question

E.g. Thus, it becomes apparent that (text 1) and (text 2) both reinforce (link to question)

Note: The more consistently you link back to your core text, the stronger your overall argument will become. Ideally, you should be aiming to create a minimum of three links to your core text in any ‘linking’ paragraph.

Integrated Paragraph Structure

Note: The following structure is only a basic guideline for how to structure an integrated paragraph. The reason these paragraphs are often more difficult to write is because they don’t have a ‘static’ structure, but rather should be appropriately adapted so that your ideas across the two texts are explored as fluidly as possible. As such, you should feel free to alter the following structure in any way that suits your analysis and enables a seamless integration of your concepts.

1. Topic Sentence – In an integrated paragraph, you must still use your topic sentence to introduce your point of argument and link to your thesis/question. However, you need to link both texts to these concepts.

2. General Example – Linking the texts together, provide a general insight into how both texts broadly explore/engage with the point of argument.

3. Specific Example/Evidence (Text 1) – From the general example, branch into a specific exploration of how ONE of your texts explores your point of argument. Try to provide relevant textual detail, such as quotes and techniques, and briefly explain the effects of these.

4. Specific Example/Evidence (Text 2) – Repeat the above step for your second text. Aim to use this exploration to link the texts together and provide more detailed insight into your point of argument.

5. Integrated Analysis of Text 1 & Text 2 – Continue your analysis of these texts by providing second and third examples that reinforce your argument. The more integrated your analyses, the stronger your paragraph will become, as you can explore your key ideas in a more sophisticated manner. Where possible, include **evaluative statements**, where you directly analyse the way in which the texts shape/influence one another.

6. Link Both Texts To The Question – Finally, link both texts back to your question and/or thesis.

For Example:

The theme of marriage and its imbedded values are central to the plotline of Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, as well as the meaning conveyed within Weldon’s Letters To Alice. Indeed, both texts delve into the intricacies of marriage and its role within society, with the intertextual connections established ultimately facilitating a deeper understanding of the attitudes towards and overall significance of marriage within the respective contexts of the texts. The centrality of this notion to Austen’s text is clearly evident from the opening line, “it is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife”. Imbedded with irony in the way that it is in fact women who possess such a need for marriage, this statement lays the foundations in enriching our understanding of marital views in Austen’s time. This is further enhanced within Fay Weldon’s text Letters to Alice, when she utilises the character of Alice to inform us of the background of Georgian society and the importance of women to marry for security, stressing that “it was a woman’s aim.” This is explicitly supported within Austen’s text as Charlotte Lucas adheres supremely to societal expectations, marrying Mr Collins, “solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment” rather than a desire for love. Her cynical tone in “happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance” emphasises women’s obligation for marriage, further supported when Weldon explains that happiness in marriage was “a lovely, if desperate, fantasy. (See Elizabeth and Darcy in Pride and Prejudice)”. The use of parentheses creates a very direct and explicit connection between the two texts, allowing the reader to understand that Darcy and Elizabeth’s marriage was rare. Yet, correspondingly, Austen rewards them with the most fortune and happiness, seen through the use of exclamations in Mrs Bennet’s overtures- “Oh my dearest Lizzy! How rich and how great you shall be!” Weldon alludes to Austen’s unconventional view on marriage, stating “She believed it was better not to marry at all, than to marry without love” and believed that Austen’s ability to gracefully and discreetly make comment on the world she lived in “left a legacy for the future to build upon”. Weldon also admits, “I am looking at a society from the outside in, not the inside out”, emphasising that a reader’s context and the passage of time gives new meaning and re-shapes the readers understanding of the theme of marriage in Austen’s text. Therefore Weldon’s modern day context and perspective draws connections to Austen’s text, enriching and creatively reshaping our understanding of the central theme of marriage and its imbedded values.

*** Note how the examples from each text flow seamlessly into one another. You should aim to emulate this structure and create clear connections between your two texts to make your paragraph as strong as possible.**

Conclusion:

Note: your conclusion should follow the same basic structure of your introduction, except instead of introducing the issues, one should sum them up.

1. Rephrase the Question – once again, it is important to link your essay back to your question to reaffirm that you are answering what has been asked.

2. Restate your Thesis Statement – it is important to reassert your thesis statement in your conclusion. Once more restate your standpoint and justification to make your original argument clear to the marker.

3. Restate your Texts – restate the texts you have used within your essay and make a brief statement regarding their applicability to your thesis/question.

4. Sum Up POAs – Sumarise your points of argument by either listing them or briefly explaining how they have been used to validate your thesis.