

## 1.01a Essay writing – a visual approach

1. **Start early**
2. **Understand the question (see Guide 1.11)**
3. **Collect your material**
4. **Use varied sources of information**
5. **Read your material purposefully**
6. **Make notes or draw a mind map (see Guide 2.11)**
7. **Get down to writing**

Writing an essay can essentially be thought of as **saying what you are going to say** (your **introduction**), **saying it** (your **main body**) and **saying what you have said** (your **conclusions**). See Figure 1.

Start with an **introduction** (see Guide 1.22) which introduces your reader both to the topic of your essay and provides an outline of the structure of your **main body** (see below). As a rough guide, your introduction should normally be about 10% of your word count.

We suggest that you use the CARS (Create A Research Space) model:

1. **Establish a territory** – establish the broader (**general**) context in which your essay is situated. Create interest and make general statements easily understood by non-specialist readers.
2. **Establish a niche** – connect the broader context with the **specific** issue you are dealing with in your essay (your niche or main question). Justify the interest and importance of your niche.
3. **Occupy the niche** – explain how you are going to investigate this topic. This may include providing an outline of the structure of the main body. This also gives the reader a signal that your introduction is ending.

The **main body of the essay** will follow your introduction (about 75-80% of your word count). It will contain your main argument or analysis. You may need to be more descriptive at the beginning as you introduce concepts and ideas. The main body is often divided into **themes**. If so, then each theme will contain a **sequence of connected paragraphs**. The average paragraph is about 100-150 words long, so a 2,500 word essay should include about 20 paragraphs. This gives you an idea of how many points you can make for each theme.

One useful approach is to think about writing your main body as **giving a presentation to a small group of your peers**. Think about displaying one slide on each theme with a number of key points. Think about the order you would make these points and their relative importance. These points should then translate into the paragraphs in your essay. The length of the paragraphs should reflect the

relative importance of the points you are making. This approach emphasises the fact that **writing is a social process** and helps you to consider the perspective of your reader.

Finally, you need to write your **conclusion** (about 10-15% of your word count). Start by writing out the main points you made in the presentation activity described above then you can summarise these. It might be appropriate to give a firm or tentative answer to your main question. Secondly, you need to move out from the **specific** issue of your essay to the **general** context in which it is situated. You may have chosen a question where you need to suggest wider implications, or future trends. You could also suggest areas worthy of further consideration. It is in this section that you can introduce your own views - as long as they are based on the arguments you have developed earlier (see Guide 1.23).

## 8. Edit and proofread your work (see Guide 1.36)

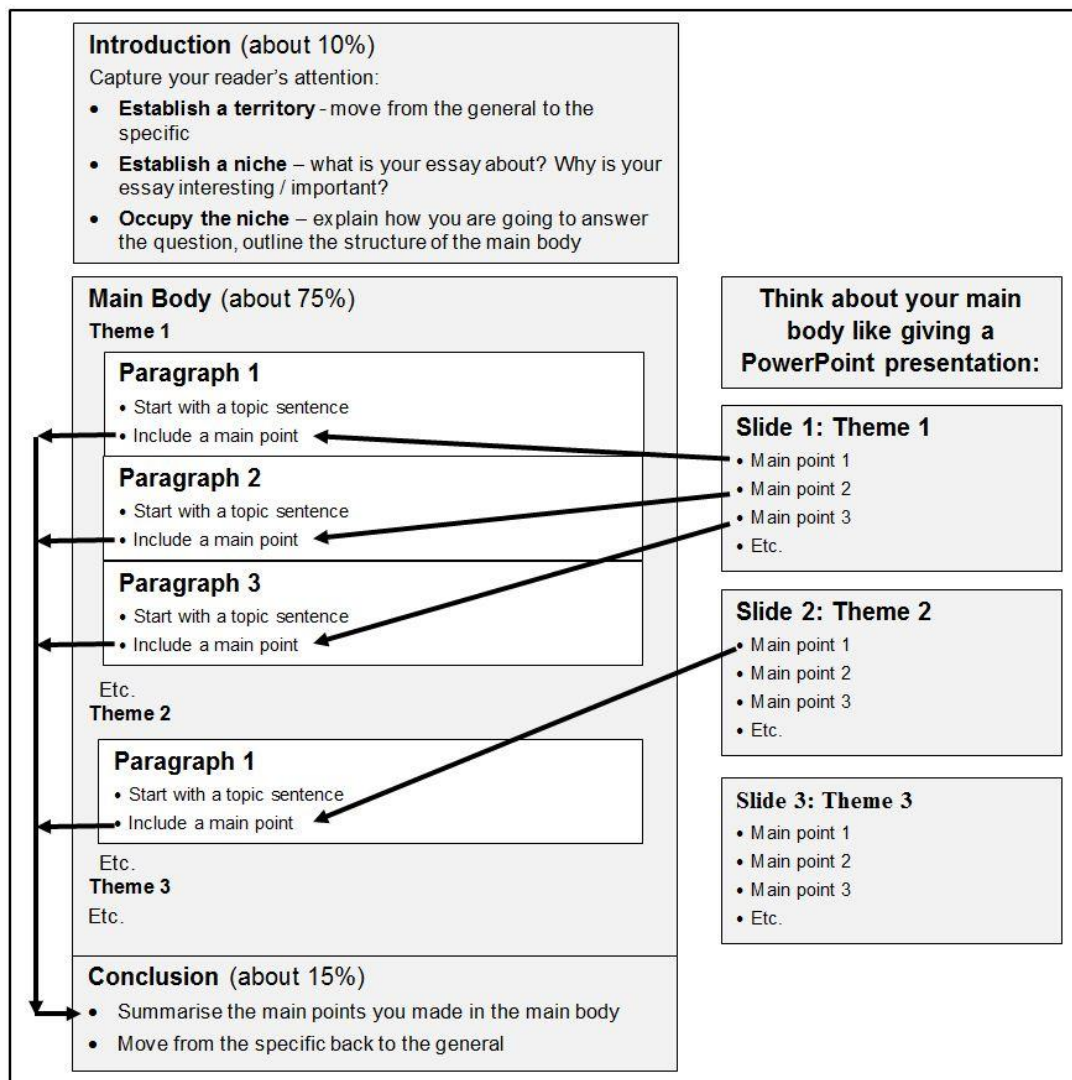


Figure 1: The essay writing process

**Other things to consider:**

- **Use an academic writing style (see Guide 1.20)**
- **Write in paragraphs (see Guide 1.30)**
- **Cohesion (see Guide 1.33)**
- **Using sources and avoiding plagiarism (see Guide 1.12)**
- **Use correct referencing (see Guide 1.13)**