

About this template

Author: Sarah Mann – howtonotsuckatwriting.wordpress.com

Important notes:

- 1) This template is for undergraduate research essays. It is not suited to essays on original research, which would include sections on theory, methods, findings, relevant literature, etc.
- 2) You do not need to adhere rigidly to this template. It's just a guide. As you practice writing essays, you will want to mix up the structure of your paragraphs, points of argument and the whole essay, at least a little bit.
- 3) As written, this template best suits a longer research essay. In a shorter essay, you will make an argument with less detail and fewer layers. You probably won't need section headings, and if you are not using sections, then you will not need to write introductory and transitional paragraphs for each point of argument.

Your essay will make one big argument: your thesis. You will use several points of argument to support your thesis. A point of argument might be a premise on which your thesis rests, one part of a multi-part thesis, or one of several circumstances or conditions under which your thesis holds true—what your points of argument are depends on what your thesis is, but they are always a series of logical or analytic steps towards supporting your thesis. In turn, each point of argument is supported by a series of smaller steps (logical steps, thoughts, analyses, themes), and these smaller steps are supported by explanations or analyses and evidence or examples.

Think of your essay as a many-layered thought process that adds up to one big argument:

1. Thesis
 - a. Point of argument supporting thesis
 - i. Logical step supporting point of argument
 1. Analysis supporting logical step
 - a. Evidence supporting analysis
 - ii. Logical step supporting point of argument
 1. Analysis supporting logical step
 - a. Evidence supporting analysis
 - b. Point of argument supporting thesis
 - i. Logical step supporting point of argument
 1. Analysis supporting logical step
 - a. Evidence supporting analysis
 - ii. Logical step supporting point of argument
 1. Analysis supporting logical step
 - a. Evidence supporting analysis
 - c. Point of argument supporting thesis...

And so on.

Section 1: Introduction

Paragraph 1

Topic sentence: Clearly state the topic of the essay.

Thesis statement: Clearly state your original, evidence-based argument about the topic.

Summary of argument: In a few sentences, explain the logical steps you will follow in your essay to support your argument. This is like a “map” of the essay, telling the reader what to expect.

Transition sentence: Write a sentence that closes this paragraph and links to the next.

Paragraph 2 (optional)

Topic sentence: Write a sentence explaining that this paragraph elaborates on the context of your topic.

Definitions: Define any jargon or technical terms that will be used in your essay that your reader might not understand. Assume that your reader is informed on the topic of the essay, and include definitions only if absolutely necessary.

Other contextual information: If your topic has been in the news recently, has been the subject of important debates, or otherwise is surrounded by remarkable events or discussions, and these events or discussions are relevant to your argument, you might want to describe them here. If you are going to describe many different discussions or events in some detail, you might want to use a separate paragraph for each, but don't get carried away with details in your introduction.

Transition sentence: write a sentence that wraps up your introduction and links it to the first part of your argument.

Section 2,3,4,5,etc. (repeat as needed): Arguments

Paragraph 1 (Introduction to section – necessary only if you are using headings to separate long sections of the essay)

Topic sentence: State your first point of argument.

Explanation: Explain the smaller steps you will take to support this point of argument.

Transition: Write a sentence wrapping up this paragraph and linking it to the next.

Paragraphs 2,3,4,5, etc. (repeat as needed)

Topic sentence: Clearly state the first logical step, thought, theme or point of analysis towards your first point of argument.

Explanatory sentences: Explain in detail the thought process behind your topic sentence.

Evidence or examples: Refer to scholarly sources or real world examples that support your thought process.

Transition: Wrap up this thought, and link it to the next.

Transitional paragraph (Conclusion of section – again, only necessary if you are using section headings in a long essay)

Topic sentence: Restate your point of argument, indicating how it follows from the steps you laid out above.

Explanation: Explain the relevance of this point of argument to your overall thesis.

Transition: Wrap up this section and link it to the next section, which will set out your next point of argument.

Last Section: Conclusion

Paragraph 1

Topic sentence: Restate your thesis, indicating that this is the conclusion of your argument

Explanation: summarize the steps you have taken to support your argument.

Transition: Wrap up this paragraph and link to the next.

Paragraph 2,3,4,5,etc (repeat until done)

Topic sentence: Write a sentence explaining the significance or relevance of your argument to the broader context of the topic.

Explanation: In a few sentences, explain the thought process behind your topic sentence.

Evidence or examples: In a few sentences, provide tokens or examples that show the validity of your thoughts.

Transition/wrap up: Link to the next paragraph or wrap up the whole essay.