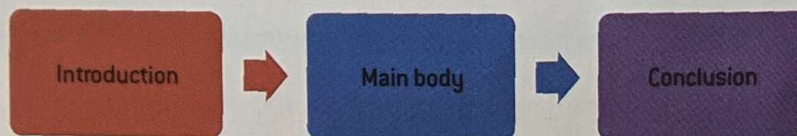


5: Writing essays

When it comes to writing an essay there is no one approach that all students should follow in terms of both style and structure. This is even more the case when considering the myriad of subjects one can write an Extended Essay in, each with its own agreed upon approaches. For example, an essay in a natural science may benefit from more sub-headings or chapters while a literature essay may be more suited to a free-flowing approach.

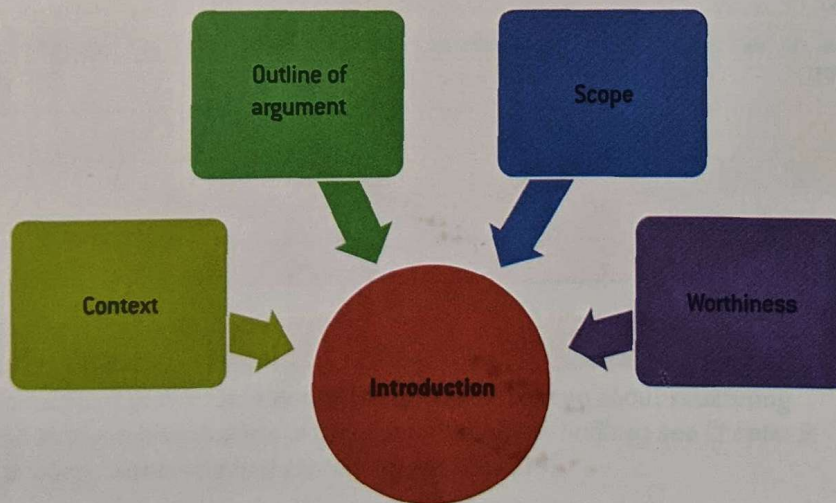
Having said that, however, when writing a formal essay a minimum expectation exists that generally adheres to the following core model:



For the purposes of the Extended Essay, there are slightly different expectations to those that students are generally accustomed to when writing these three sections. The following pages are dedicated to helping students navigate these expectations while also providing some exemplar models that can be used to help structure their work.

Introduction

An introduction for an Extended Essay requires students to include the following aspects:



Aside from giving the essay a structural outline that any reader can follow, these aspects also help ensure that the expectations for Criterion A (Focus and Method) are met.

i. **Context:** Explicitly stating your research question and providing some context that situates your question within existing knowledge is key to a strong introduction. This does **not** mean providing detailed background information but rather indicating to an examiner what existing theories, critical approaches, methods or factors have already been suggested or exist to answer your research question.

ii. **Outline of argument:** Including the research question in your introduction is a quick way of ensuring you've made what you will be focusing on clear. In addition to this, it allows you to specify which aspects, factors or key features you will be investigating that will help answer your overall question. Doing this in the order they appear in the main body is advised.

Tip

Therefore, the **writing of the introduction often comes last.**

iii. **Scope:** It is vital that you indicate in your introduction *how* you've gone about answering your research question. This means indicating to the examiner what source material has been used, or scientific methodologies followed or critical interpretations challenged and so on.

Stating that your essay utilized websites, books and journals is not as good as indicating exactly which authors, theories or methods have been used.

iv. **Worthiness:** Finally, it is important to indicate why your research question is worthy of investigation. Using the phrase "this research question is worthy of investigation because ..." forces you to consider worthiness by default.

The following list gives some indication of what is considered grounds for worthiness of investigation and what is not.

Worthy of investigation because:

- The question has contemporary application (for example, environmental benefits)
- The issues the question explores are controversial in nature (that is, they generate debate and have differing opinions relating to them rather than being simply scandalous in nature)
- The conclusion to this question may shed light on other areas or issues
- The investigation challenges existing theories or viewpoints
- The investigation explores the validity or reliability of a chosen theory or approach
- The question has not been covered or investigated before
- The question relates to a core field of contemporary research
- The topic is important in a geo-political sense as it affects X and Y groups of people
- The conclusions arrived at will enable greater understanding of the topic
- The conclusions arrived at will clarify existing misconceptions

Note

The Introduction in an Extended Essay is **not** the place to include detailed background information on an author, theory or topic. If you must include background information, save it for the main body or a separate section entitled "Background".

Tip

Therefore, wherever possible, **be specific.**

Avoid:

- Selecting an investigation simply because you like the topic
- Selecting an investigation simply because you have had a good teacher
- Selecting an investigation because you were instructed to do so
- Selecting a topic where the conclusions act as a springboard for preaching or one-dimensional arguments
- Making emotional appeals (for example, if only everyone did "X" the world would be a better place)

Exemplar introduction: Below are sections of an introduction that showcase how to go about including the four core aspects outlined in 5.1.

Research question (history): *To what extent does Muawiya owe his accession to the Caliphate in 661 AD to the weakness of his principal rival, Caliph Ali?*

Context

Muawiya's accession to the caliphate is a hotly debated topic among historians with some, such as Kennedy, arguing that he owes his elevation to the weakness of opposition as reflected in the figure of Caliph Ali, while others, such as Shaban, arguing that his success owes itself in large measure to the tangible economic benefits that support for Muawiya provided the Arab tribes ...

Outline of argument

...this essay seeks to challenge the orthodox interpretation offered by Kennedy and instead argue that Muawiya's success owes much to the changing socio-economic dynamics among Arab tribesmen within the newly formed Islamic Empire ...

Scope

...the essay will also simultaneously explore what other factors, including the governorship of Syria, the conflict with Byzantium, the dwindling role of the Ansar, and the role of the Kharijites played in helping Muawiya take over the Caliphate while relying on the works of principal historians such as Kennedy, Shaban, Armstrong and Hawting.

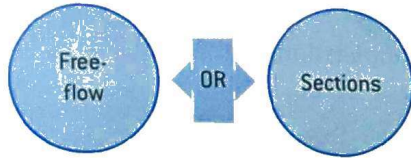
Worthiness of investigation

...this research question is worthy of investigation because Muawiya's rise to the caliphate marks a significant turning point in the development of the Islamic Empire during the seventh century and beyond. It established the tradition of dynastic and monarchic succession that would become commonplace in the ensuing centuries ... the role played by Caliph Ali in supplanting the Rashidun model with a dynastic model is of critical significance to this early medieval period as it created the conditions for the schism between Sunni and Shi'a practices ...

Recommended word count (Introduction): 300–450 words

Main body

As previously mentioned, the main body of an Extended Essay can differ structurally depending on which subject (or topic even) has been chosen. When structuring an Extended Essay the first consideration for the main body is to choose between a free-flow writing style or a more compartmentalized one where the essay is subdivided into sections or chapters.



Although there is no hard and fast rule for this, the table below lists the most commonly seen approaches when it comes to structuring an essay in a particular subject (or topic area):

Subject/Topic	Approach
Literature	Free-flow
Language or culture	Sub-headings, chapters, free-flow
Humanities	Sub-headings, chapters
Sciences	Sub-headings, chapters
Mathematics	Sub-headings, chapters
Arts	Sub-headings, chapters, free-flow

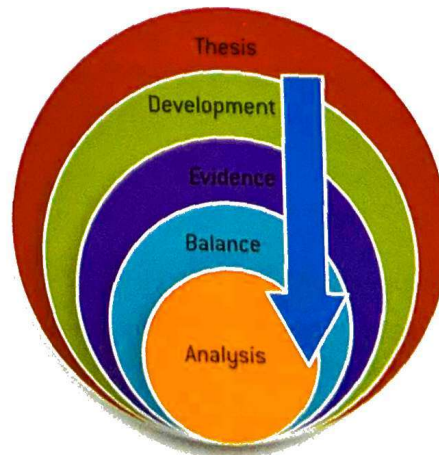
Irrespective of the chosen approach, all essays benefit from some clear pre-planning with regards to the core points they wish to develop so as to answer their research question.

Identifying the essay's core points is of immense help when it comes to structuring your writing as it can form the basis of the sub-headings used (or in the case of a free-flow essay, the layout of the paragraphs) so that a developing argument is formed. (See Worksheet 2 on page 77 for more help with this.)

Paragraph writing

Irrespective of the approach selected, all essays should feature paragraphs. The important point to keep in mind when it comes to paragraphs is that they should indicate a shift from one line of argument to another, or from one developmental point to another.

The exemplar model below provides a structured approach to paragraph writing based on five parts that can be visually represented thus:



Thesis

- **Thesis**—a brief opening line (or two) establishing the key element to be covered in the paragraph.

Development

- **Development**—an elaboration of your principal thesis. The meaning of your thesis, the areas it touches upon and so forth.
- It should flow naturally from the thesis.
- It can offer mini-analyses as you wrestle with the implications of what you're saying.

Evidence

- **Evidence**—the most important part of each paragraph. All theses and points raised in your development should be supported by evidence.

This could take the shape of:

- quotes from secondary sources
- examples from real-life situations (news, articles, events and so forth)
- examples and/or events from personal experience (the knower's perspective)
- facts and data (such as statistical information and measurements)
- illustrations and diagrams (both primary and secondary in nature).

Balance

- **Balance**—attempts should be made in either the existing paragraph or in a completely new one to offer alternative perspectives to the key thesis under consideration.

Analysis

- **Analysis**—at the end of each paragraph there should be a line (or two) linking the information back to the overall research question.
- Students should be able to answer the following question in each paragraph:
What insight does this paragraph offer to the overall question?
- It could also suggest any contradictions/unresolved issues.

Exemplar paragraph: Below is a full example of how to use this five-stage model to structure your paragraphs.

Research question (history): *How significant a role did the Prophet Muhammad's military victories play to the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula?*

The paragraph

1. Thesis statement (or topic sentence): Establishes what point or issue your paragraph is going to develop. This should be written in the form of a statement that is relevant to the overall question or topic being addressed.

For example: Muhammad's string of early military victories, primarily against the Quresh, were a significant factor in the early development of Islam.

2. Elaboration (development): Explains in greater detail what is meant by the thesis statement.

For example: During Muhammad's prolonged exile in Yathrib (Medina) from 622 to 630, his position as the pre-eminent religious leader of the nascent Islamic community (umma) was consolidated and secured by his abilities to defeat the enemies of Islam in accordance with practices the local Arabs (badw) would recognize as noteworthy. Muhammad, in true tribal chieftain form, was able to attract supporters to his fold through the pursuit of raids and campaigns which bolstered his reputation and standing among his fellow men.



3. Evidence, events, examples: All statements must be supported by one or more pieces of evidence.

For example: According to Armstrong, the Prophet Muhammad's victory at Badr "impressed the Bedouin tribes, some of whom enjoyed seeing ... the mighty Quraysh brought low" (Armstrong, 2001, p.17). In time, Muhammad's victory at the Battle of the Trench where his force of 3,000 defeated a force three times larger "convinced the nomadic tribes that Muhammad was the coming man and made the Quraysh look decidedly passé" (Armstrong, 2001, p.17).



4. Balance: Offer an argument opposite to the one you are making to show you have looked at the issue from more than one angle, but make sure you counter-argue so that you have still made your point.

Note



This could be its own paragraph in certain cases or it could be blended in to all paragraphs in the main body.

For example: However, despite the prestige gained from Muhammad's victories, these alone would have been worth nothing had he not followed it up with a more localized campaign in Medina and its surrounds to root out his most dangerous ideological rivals, principal among those being the Jewish clans who had aligned themselves with the Meccans (Qaynuqah, Nadir and Qurayzah). By crushing them, and in the case of the Qurayzah, massacring all 700 of their men and selling their women and children into slavery, he ensured that his military victories brought about more long-term benefits.

5. Analysis: The last few lines of your paragraph should answer the following question:

- What does all of the above have to do with the question?

OR

- How does the above information link back to the question?

For example: It becomes increasingly clear, therefore, that Muhammad's military victories significantly aided his reputation and prestige among the Arab tribes by playing on local sensitivities and traditions of "good" leadership. However, these would not have translated into long-term benefits had it not been for his parallel campaign against ideological and political rival bases.

—Armstrong, K., *A Short History of Islam*, 2002

Recommended word count (Conclusion): 350–450 words

1. Personal pronouns in sentences.

For example: "I believe/think that one of the factors that led to Muhammad's victories ..." Instead, frame the sentence into a statement:

For example: "One of the major factors that led to the rise of Islam in the sixth century ..."

2. Direct YES/NO responses in your introductions and conclusions.

For example: "No, I disagree that the military victories ..."

Instead, frame the response into a statement that establishes your viewpoint:

For example: "It is difficult to agree with the statement that the military campaigns alone ..."

3. Incorrect spelling of familiar or key words. Whether you like it or not consistent bad spelling of key terms and words creates a negative impression.

For example: "new York", "hitler" and "effect vs. affect".

4. Excessive narrative. Avoid writing a history of events. Examiners are looking for an analysis of events, not a full retelling.

For example: "... did play a part because that led to an argument between Muhammad and the Quresh which then led to a war where many people were killed ... and then there was a reprisal attack."

Instead, opt for a summative statement or major topic sentence/heading that includes all the information within it.

For example: "The military campaigns played a critical part in establishing Islam as the predominant socio-cultural force in Arabia and by extension a political power as it exploited the pre-existing Arabic cultural norms."

5. Inaccuracies.

For example: "The Battle of Waterloo was a military victory for the Napoleon."

Instead, ensure you revise your notes so that your content is 100% accurate.

6. Use punctuation marks.

Don't be scared of the full stop! When the central meaning of a sentence changes you need to indicate that with a full stop. Commas are also helpful to break up linked ideas within a long sentence.

Analysis

When conducting an analysis you are effectively relating the material gathered to the primary focus and objectives of your Extended Essay's research question. The key questions you should be asking of your sources are:

1. How does the information gathered relate to my question?
2. What answer (even partial) does the source provide?

When conducting an analysis:

- you must demonstrate a scholarly interpretation of your findings—this means that you must draw links to academic theories or approaches relevant to your subject, not simply tell a narrative or provide a description of the data
- you must provide evidence to support your various points and highlight the relationship between them. This often means referring to your primary and secondary research findings (including any statistics, tables and diagrams) to support your argument.

Remember



Remember, examiners want to see a logical argument develop that is well-supported by relevant evidence.

Analytical structure: How to demonstrate analysis in writing

The following tips and strategies are aimed at ensuring that your writing is structured in such a way that it ensures that analysis is taking place.

Signposts indicating critical discussion:

1. Use reporting verbs

Reporting verbs help strengthen and support a line of argument while also indicating to the examiner why or how the source is useful.

There is a near infinite amount of reporting verbs but some of the most common can be found below:

- verbs that present the author's viewpoint
- verbs that offer a neutral or objective assessment
- provide insight into the thoughts and feelings of the author
- other useful verbs

Jeffery (1997) **argues** ...

Henderson (2014) **conceded** ...

Chittenden (1998) **describes** ...

Halstead (1992) **defines** ...

Santrampurwala (1999) **contested** ...

Mc Mullen (2010) **investigated** ...

Richardson (1996) **believes** ...

Analysed

Claimed

Compared

Commented

Concluded

Criticized

Demonstrated

Discussed

Illustrated

Thurston (2001) **disputes** ...

Birimac (2011) **reinforced** ...

Pagomenakis (2004) **states** ...

Jones (1999) **highlights** ...

Mc Glinchey (2000) **evaluated** ...

Bell (1978) **estimated** ...

Rees (2003) **recognizes** ...

Indicated

Noted

Observed

Pointed out

Reported

Showed

Suggested

Validated

Verified

2. Skip a line	When writing, skip a line between paragraphs to indicate to an examiner that you are moving on to another analytical point.
3. Use linking words	In order to ensure your argument flows you must link your ideas together so they read as one developing argument. The best way to ensure this is by means of linking words.
i. when building up an argument	and, also, as well as, moreover, further, furthermore, in addition, additionally, next, secondly, thirdly, in conjunction
ii. when drawing comparisons	similarly, likewise, in the same way, equally, challenging
iii. when highlighting contrasts	although, for all that, however, on the contrary, conversely, otherwise, yet, but, even so, despite
iv. when indicating both similarities and/or differences	yet, even so, despite, notwithstanding
v. when providing reasons or a rationale	for this reason, to this end, for this purpose, because, since, so that
vi. when explaining results	as, as a consequence, as a result, hence, therefore, thus, inevitably, so
vii. when citing examples	for example, for instance, in other words, by way of illustration, such as, this demonstrates, which can be seen in, as cited by
viii. when arriving at conclusions	as has been noted, finally, in brief, in short, to summarize, consequently, therefore, in conclusion, in other words, accordingly
4. Create a logical order	Read through your work and then move the paragraphs or sections around so that the argument flows or develops in a logical order.
5. Use sources	Sources must always act as the bedrock of any analysis as they provide an externally validated support to your own ideas and writing.
*All quotes below have been written by the author for demonstration purposes only.	Sources should be used to ensure the following:
i. provide further explanations.	Use a source to add further detail to a line of argument or to some relevant facts you've referred to. <i>For example: The Fourth Lateran Council provided Pope Innocent III with a platform to re-impose Papal authority over European bishops, which Geralt adds was also "a much needed stimulus for the Papacy".</i>



ii. provide agreement.

Use a source to provide agreement or arrive at a consensus on a point or key issue.

For example: The Fourth Lateran Council was a watershed moment for Pope Innocent III as it not only provided him with a basis for re-imposing papal authority over the bishops but also signalled the power of Papal institutions. This is a view shared by Merigold who argues that "Innocent's council marked the beginning of a return to form for the Papacy".

iii. provide alternative viewpoints or approaches.

Use a source to provide alternative points of view or varied approaches to a key point or issue.

For example: The Fourth Lateran Council was a watershed moment for Pope Innocent III as it not only provided him with a basis for re-imposing papal authority over the bishops but also signalled the power of Papal institutions. However, Riannon argues that "Innocent's council marked a last ditch, desperate move by the Pope to regain the initiative".

6. Be heard

Provide your own voice to any discussion or debate by commenting on the results, data and any findings you've come by.

Ask the ever important question: *What does this information reveal about my research question?*

Conclusion

The conclusion to an Extended Essay must be taken very seriously as it brings your essay to a formal close.

A conclusion must...

ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The conclusion should reiterate the key findings and main points developed in the body of the essay and provide a resolution to your research question.

Below are a list of things that can feature in a conclusion and things to avoid at all costs.

Good:

1. A response to the actual question on your title page (ensure you have not drifted into responding to a slightly different question or focus).
2. Comment on any inconclusive findings or multiple interpretations if that is what your research has indicated.
3. Disprove your core thesis if your evidence has led you to this conclusion.
4. Offer an evaluation of the value and limitations of the methodology, process or sources you have utilized.
5. Mention any unresolved or additional questions that have arisen as a result of your research and why their answer goes beyond the remit of the current work.
6. Summarize the key points raised in the main body and synthesize them into a final analysis.

Avoid:

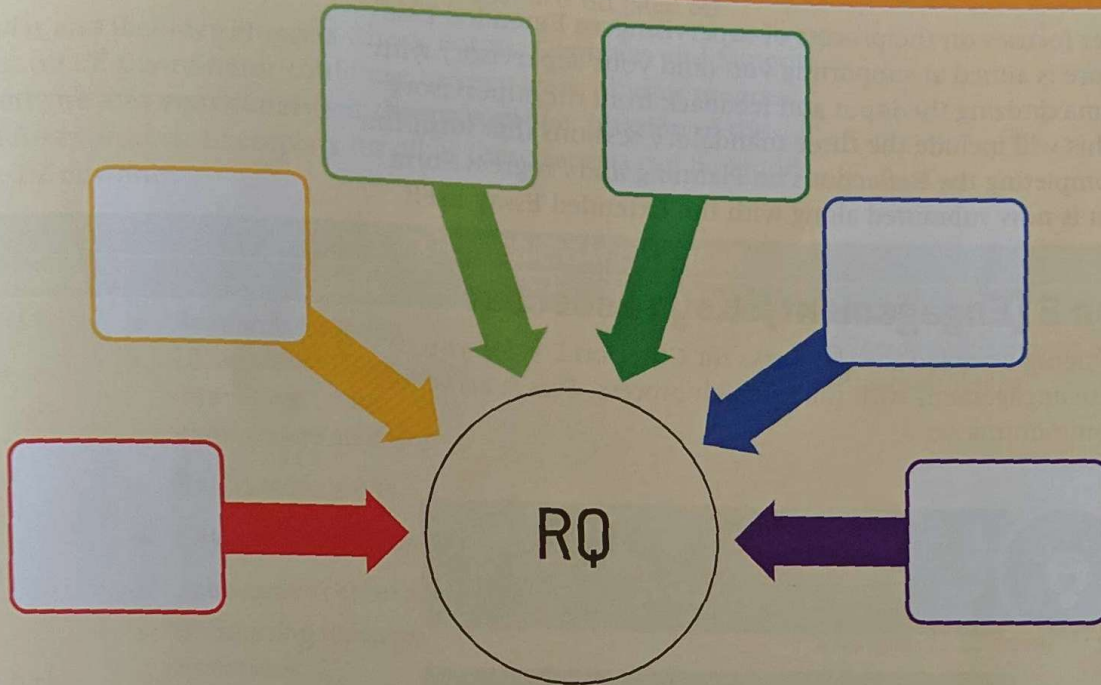
1. Introducing any new material (this includes quotes not seen before in the essay).
2. Offering no conclusion whatsoever (you should offer a resolution even if it is partial or incomplete).
3. Including any emotive or personal statements.
4. Including any accusations (it is not your role to judge).
5. Answering a question that is different to the one on the cover.

Exemplar paragraph: Below is an example showcasing a conclusion that meets the general requirements as outlined above.

Research question (English Literature): To what extent could Bram Stoker's *Dracula* be read as a representation of British imperial anxieties relating to reverse colonization?

Worksheet 2: Organizing the main body's key points

- A. Identify the main points you are going to develop in the body of your essay that directly relate to your research question.



- B. Now place them in the order that best enables an argument to develop. You may wish to start with your strongest point or a factor included in the research question itself before moving on to other subsidiary points (or factors).
