

## Student resource sheet

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### The structure of an evaluative essay

In essay writing, the word *evaluate* means **to make a judgment about a topic and to present it persuasively**.

#### Introduction

Your essay's introduction has two main components.

**Component 1 – A thesis statement stating your answer simply and concisely.**

Your introduction should contain a sentence that completely summarises the main argument, contention, position or thesis of your essay. A thesis statement is just a sentence in which you answer the essay question or respond to the statement. You are simply stating your position.

**Component 2 – A list of the key points to come in your essay, presented in logical order.**

After your thesis statement, the remainder of your introduction must bring together all of your thoughts about the topic — distilled into key points that will be the vital elements of the paragraphs to come. It is essentially a road map of signposts that flag all of the points that you will present to make your evaluation. These points make up the topic sentences to be presented in the essay. Do not add specific evidence, details, facts or examples in the introduction. You will present your key points and evidence in detail in the main body.

#### Main body

Each paragraph of the main body has four main components.

**Component 1 – A topic sentence that presents a key point which supports your thesis.** We know that all paragraphs should begin with a topic sentence. Each topic sentence should make a specific, clear point. It's vital that we follow the correct structure when composing essays. If our writing is going to be simple, concise and easy to follow, we will need to organise the piece properly. How we achieve this is to limit the discussion in each paragraph to just one key idea. This way, we have the ability to expand upon and dig deeper into the points we raise.

**Component 2 – One or more pieces of evidence.** Following the point, some examples, details, facts, descriptions or other evidence about the topic should be presented that directly relates to the point.

**Component 3 – An explanation of the evidence.** After the examples, details or evidence has been presented, there must be an explanation of the evidence presented and how it illustrates or supports the truth of the initial point made in the topic sentence. When we are making an evaluation of a geographical topic, we need to use evidence such as facts and details from the environment. Research data, statistics, survey responses, anecdotal evidence and material drawn from other texts can be included as evidence. But ultimately, evidence is only as good as the use we make of it. We cannot leave a statistic, fact or quote just hanging. We must ensure that every piece of evidence we put into our writing earns its place and makes a useful contribution.

**Component 4 – A link back to your thesis.** After your explanation, you must tie the whole paragraph directly to your thesis. This can usually be accomplished by reinforcing how the explanation of the evidence answers the question or addresses the statement in the essay prompt. Connective language (such as 'As we have already seen', 'Because of this' or 'In light of this fact') demonstrates that a transition has occurred. This helps you achieve a better and clearer paragraph structure.

Work systematically through the main body, using a topic sentence as the beginning sentence of each paragraph, elucidating the evidence and explanation for each point in a separate paragraph, crystallising your thesis as you go and thereby building a cohesive essay.

#### Conclusion

The conclusion should contain three main components.

**Component 1** – Firstly, we restate the thesis for a final time. We don't use tricks of language to simply invert the question. Simply write in a straightforward manner to express your thoughts in slightly different wording to the question but in a way that's directly relevant and applicable.

**Component 2** – Secondly, we must state that the points introduced in your topic sentences support the thesis. This doesn't necessarily mean re-listing those points, but instead summarising them in another way. You do not introduce new material in the conclusion.

**Component 3** – Finally, use a generalisation or other statement that will drive your argument home. You might use a generalisation that's widely applicable to the topic or the context. You might've been saving up a special insight. You should use concise language, helping to persuade the reader toward your side. You might make a reference to a fact that gives the impression that you're knowledgeable about the topic beyond the confines of this essay task. Whatever you say, you should try to sound authoritative and there should be a sense of linkage between your statement and the evaluation you've built throughout the analysis.