
Creating an Essay Plan

An essay plan is one of the most helpful tools you can use to write your essay. It gets you writing immediately, so you never have to face "blank page" syndrome.

How does an essay plan help?

- ✓ It enables you to organise and prepare a coherent argument for your essay.
- ✓ It enables you to design a logical structure for your work, and it provides you with an end point before you start writing.
- ✓ It makes the process of essay writing far easier; if you are trying to structure and write your essay at the same time it can be quite difficult and confusing. Using a plan means one of those tasks is already done, so you can focus on writing your work in a clear and concise manner.
- ✓ Most importantly, an essay plan will help you to stay on track and stick to the point.

Quick Tips

- ✓ It is useful to write out your essay plan on a blank piece of paper and keep it pinned in front of you, or on your desk while you write.
- ✓ Your plan should include an outline of each of the paragraphs in your essay and the key ideas/ topics/ themes you wish to address.
- ✓ You will always have an introduction, a conclusion, and a number of body paragraphs. The number of body paragraphs you have will depend on the word count you have been assigned, e.g. if you had a 2,000-word essay, you may have an introduction, a conclusion, and 4 body paragraphs.
- ✓ Assign a word count to each of your paragraphs so you know how much you are going to write, e.g a 2,000-word essay might be comprised of:
 - An introduction (300 words).
 - Body paragraph 1 (400 words).
 - Body paragraph 2 (400 words).
 - Body Paragraph 3 (400 words).
 - Body Paragraph 4 (400 words).
 - A Conclusion (200 words).
- ✓ Each of the body paragraphs in your essay should focus on one central idea/ topic/ theme; identify that central idea in the plan.
- ✓ Use your plan to organise your ideas/ topics/ themes in a logical order, e.g. in an essay discussing heritage policies in Ireland, it might be useful to start the body of your essay with a first paragraph on European legislation and how it informs Irish policy (this means that you're moving from the "big picture" ideas to the "small", more nuanced ones).
- ✓ Each body paragraph should: 1) introduce its central idea; 2) provide information on this topic from the literature; 3) include a critical evaluation/ review/ discussion. Identify each of these 3 tasks in short-hand in your plan so you remember to include them in the essay.
- ✓ Develop the central idea with details, definitions, examples, comparisons, and contrasts.