# HOW TO WRITE A WINNING ESSAY

There are 3 sections to an essay: An introduction

A main body

A conclusion

**Source:** <http://www.examiner.com/quilting-in-national/april-quilt-shows>

## The Introduction

The introduction is the first paragraph of your essay and it should do three things.

There are 3 sections to an essay:

1. Introduction

It should introduce your reader to the *topic* of your essay.

(What your essay is ‘about’)

1. A main body

It should make clear to the reader your *contention opinion / position*.

(This position must stay consistent throughout your piece of writing)

1. A conclusion

It should briefly outline the *arguments* or *assertions* you are going to make in order to support your position

(What your essay is going to say to ‘prove’ your position)

Read the following introduction to an essay on *‘Dogs make better pets than cats’,* and identify these three things by shading / underlining each in a different colour.

*Domestic animals have served humans in a number of capacities throughout history. Cats and dogs have, over time, become the animals most favoured by humans as pets. Though each have their own unique qualities, it would be fair to say that dogs make much better pets than cats. Dogs are far more loyal than cats and are more obedient. They can be trained to do different tasks for their owners, and often provide a degree of protection.*

The 4 arguments that the writer of this essay is going to use in her main body to support her position that dogs are better than cats are:

1.

2.

3.

4.

## The Main Body

The main body of an essay is all the paragraphs that appear in between the introduction and the conclusion.

Each of the arguments raised in the introduction are explained and expanded upon in the **same order** in the main body: One paragraph per argument

How many paragraphs will appear in the main body of the cats and dogs essay? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Each main body paragraph can be written by following the ***TEEL formula***

***T***opic sentence

Your first sentence in a main body paragraph should begin with a topic sentence, this sentence will clearly indicate to the reader what the paragraph will be covering – what argument or point you are about to discuss.

***E***xplain / ***E***laborate

Explain the statement you made in the *Topic Sentence* in more detail.

Elaborate on what you mean.

***E***xample / ***E***vidence

Use some evidence (a quote from another writer or a historical figure, a statistic, etc.) or an example (from personal experiences, from history, from a study, from common knowledge, etc.) to support the claim you’ve just made. Please note at times you will find that you have intertwined the example with the exploration, don’t be concerned. You must ensure that both of the *EE of TEEL* has been covered

***L***ink.

This link is very important as you will use this link to refer back to your contention in the introduction. Tell the reader how what you’ve said in the paragraph supports your position.

Here’s an example of a paragraph from the main body for the cats and dogs essay. In a different colour for each, underline the sentences which make up the *TEEL* formula in this paragraph.

*One of the most enduring characteristics of dogs as pets is their unquestioning loyalty to their masters. While cats are known to be very independent creatures, dogs seem to live for their master’s love and attention and will usually do anything for them. Dogs have been known to travel great distances to find their master when lost, and to save and protect their owners from danger at any cost. It is this level of loyalty and devotion, rarely seen in cats, which make dogs more valued and valuable pet.*

Each main body paragraph can be linked to the one previous, by starting each paragraph with a **linking word** or **phrase**. Words and phrases such as:

However ... In addition ... Similarly ... Despite this ...

Thus ... By contrast ... Although...

could be all used to start a main body paragraph, depending on what is being said in that paragraph and whether it agrees or disagrees with what was said in the paragraph before.

Underline in **green** those linking words which link two paragraphs which agree,

And underline in **red**thosewhich suggest the two paragraphs disagree.

## The Conclusion

The conclusion is the last paragraph in your essay. No new points or arguments are raised in the conclusion. Instead, the conclusion is a brief restatement or summary of what you’ve just argued and / or covered in your essay. It is different to an introduction in so far as it is written with the confidence that the point has been made, not that the point will be made. Here’s a conclusion for the cats and dogs essay.

*Cats may have been worshipped by the ancient Egyptians, but as a pet, dogs are by far the more valued domestic animal. Their unconditional loyalty and love for their owners is unmatched by any animal. The attentiveness and obedience that results from this love allows them to be trained for a number of tasks useful to humans, while they also offer so much protection for their masters. In being both so loving and useful dogs are undeniably the better household pet.*

## Handy Hints

* When writing your introduction, try to avoid telling your reader what you or the essay are going to do, eg.

“*In this essay I am going to ....” “This essay will attempt to prove ...”: “The next point is that ...”*

* When writing an essay, try to avoid*“I, me, my” language such as “My next point is ...” “I believe that ...” “In my opinion ...” “it seems clear to me that ...”*
* Avoid using the phrase “:*In conclusion ...”* at the start of your conclusion.

## Be more creative!

Each of these boxes represent one paragraph in the cats and dogs essay.

Write in each of them what the paragraph is, or what its topic is.

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| --- |
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## Detailed Essay Plan

**Essay topic: THE QUESTION:**

**Highligh the topic, circle the focus, underline the instructions**

**Introduction**

Contention (your main statement that answers / addresses the question / topic)

MAIN IDEAS: (What are the ideas that support your contention that you will discuss in your essay?)

* ...
* ...
* ...
* ...

**Body Paragraph 1:**

**T**opic Sentence (Write a clear sentence that introduces your first main idea):

**E**xplain (explain in more detail what you mean, expand on your topic sentence):

**E**vidence (information, quotes, facts, research, articles, data, anecdotes, etc. that support what you are trying to say):

**L**ink ((how does what you have just written relate to the question / your contention / your next paragraph?):

**Body Paragraph 3:**

**T**opic Sentence (Write a clear sentence that introduces your first main idea):

**E**xplain (explain in more detail what you mean, expand on your topic sentence):

**E**vidence (information, quotes, facts, research, articles, data, anecdotes, etc. that support what you are trying to say):

**L**ink ((how does what you have just written relate to the question / your contention / your next paragraph?):

**Body Paragraph 2:**

**T**opic Sentence (Write a clear sentence that introduces your first main idea):

**E**xplain (explain in more detail what you mean, expand on your topic sentence):

**E**vidence (information, quotes, facts, research, articles, data, anecdotes, etc. that support what you are trying to say):

**L**ink ((how does what you have just written relate to the question / your contention / your next paragraph?):

**Conclusion:**

What conclusions have you reached about the topic? How has your essay proved your contention? How has your understanding of the topic developed? What overall assumptions can be made? Can you think of an interesting quote or phrase to finish your essay?

* ...
* ...
* ...
* ...

**Note:**

* Longer essays of more than 500 words will require more body paragraphs

Complete your plan using the same format as for body paragraphs 1-4

* Different essays in different subjects may require you to alter the structure slightly

Use this plan as a basic outline only

* Persuasive / Argumentative essays sometimes require a ‘rebuttal’ paragraph

This paragraph will be part of the body of your essay, either the first or the last body

paragraph