

## 6 STEPS FOR WRITING A GOOD ACADEMIC ESSAY

**Barbara E Basel**

<b>Step 1:</b>	Think about the topic carefully from all perspectives before deciding on your point of view/argument. Will you be able to justify your opinion?
<b>Step 2:</b>	Plan carefully before starting to write the essay. Create a mind map and outline your ideas carefully – this will help you to write coherent essay that the reader will be able to follow and understand.
<b>Step 3:</b>	Organise your ideas in a logical sequence. Begin the essay by stating your point of view. Throughout the rest of the essay you must clearly explain your ideas one at a time and then make sure you justify each claim.  Merely stating a point such as “information gathered as a result of torture is worthless” is not sufficient. You have to give more details, i.e. explain WHY the information is worthless, so that the claim becomes clear to your reader. Never assume that the reader “gets” the point. Lead the reader through the points by providing a detailed explanation.
<b>Step 4:</b>	Conclude the essay. An essay without a conclusion is incomplete. All the ideas mentioned in the essay to support your main point of view/argument should be re-stated briefly at the end. The conclusion is a summary that emphasises your opinion.
<b>Step 5:</b>	EDIT the essay. You must CHECK what you have written for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar or logic before you submit it for marking. Eliminate any <b>contradictions*</b> and/or <b>ambiguous**</b> statements (a statement with a double meaning) because these will confuse your reader.
<b>Step 6:</b>	Correct the errors and add any other details that you feel are necessary. It is a good idea to read your essay aloud – when we read silently we often see what we want to see and not what is actually written on the page. You can also ask a friend to read your essay.

**\*Contradiction** occurs when the opposite of what has just been said is put forward. Check that everything stated in the essay agrees.

**\*\*Ambiguity** occurs when a sentence can be interpreted in more than one way e.g.

“If the baby will not eat a banana, mash it to a pulp.”

This sentence seems to suggest that the baby should be mashed! The intended meaning is that the banana should be mashed, so that the baby can eat it.

## PARAGRAPH CONSTRUCTION

**Paragraphs** are made up of a number of different types of sentences – these include a **topic sentence** and **supporting sentences**, as can be seen in the following paragraph.

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live and are clean and efficiently managed. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.

**Topic Sentence** – this is the first sentence used in a paragraph and introduces the **main idea** of this specific paragraph; that is, it usually summarises the idea to be discussed in the paragraph.

**Example of a Topic Sentence**

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. (The remaining sentences in the paragraph will state these three reasons.)

**Supporting Sentences** – once you have stated your topic in the first sentence, you need to provide details that support the paragraph's topic. There are usually three supporting ideas within a paragraph. These ideas may include examples, or instances that explain the supporting idea in greater detail. The supporting sentences can add up to six additional sentences.

**Example of Supporting Sentences**

(1) First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price.

(2) Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university.

(3) Finally, Canada's cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live and are clean and efficiently managed.

**Concluding Sentence** – this is the last sentence of a paragraph. In this sentence the idea is re-stated, using different terminology to that used in the topic sentence. Remember that you want to reinforce your statement, but must not bore the reader with repetition.

***Example of a concluding sentence.*** As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.