

Tips for structuring an essay

	Do	Don't
Context	Contextualise: explain how the issue fits into the bigger picture	DON'T begin your discussion without giving any context or background information
Relevance	<p>Answer the question and keep referring back to the title throughout your essay</p> <p>Be selective in choosing your arguments</p> <p>Tell the reader explicitly why something is relevant</p>	<p>DON'T forget the title. It is amazing how many people do!</p> <p>DON'T tell the whole story, including everything you know about the topic</p> <p>DON'T leave the reader to guess at connections you make in your head</p>
Structure	<p>Include an introduction and conclusion to frame your essay</p> <p>Structure points in a logical order</p> <p>Include one main idea in each paragraph</p>	<p>DON'T ignore the importance of introductions/conclusions for setting out/closing your arguments</p> <p>DON'T mix up content that should be in different places in the same paragraph/section</p> <p>DON'T try to cover too many ideas in one paragraph</p>
Evidence	<p>Support your claims with specific and appropriate evidence and examples</p> <p>Make sure there is a balance of critical discussion and supporting evidence</p>	<p>DON'T make claims or generalisations</p> <p>DON'T have all evidence and no discussion (e.g. copying from the internet or books, using long quotes with little or no discussion about their relevance)</p>
Evaluation	Discuss, analyse and critique the evidence, looking at strengths and weaknesses, patterns and trends, connections and complexities	DON'T generalise or make assumptions based on personal experience
Language	<p>Define any problematic key terms</p> <p>Be precise, clear and to the point</p> <p>Foster an academic style by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using formal english (avoid slang and colloquialisms) - avoiding abbreviations and contractions - attempting an impersonal style - using nominalisation - being objective - hedging (using cautious language) - avoiding conjunctions at the start of sentences 	<p>DON'T present vague arguments, state the obvious or repeat information</p> <p>DON'T assume that your interpretation, and your reader's understanding of key terms, is the same</p>