An academic essay has three sections: an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion.

An introduction generally does three things. The first part is usually a general comment that shows the reader why the topic’s important, gets their interest, and leads them into the topic. It isn’t actually part of your argument. The next part of the introduction is the thesis statement. This is your response to the question; your final answer. As such, it’s probably the most important part of the introduction. Finally, the introduction tells the reader what they can expect in the essay body. This is where you briefly outline your arguments.

Here’s an example of the introduction to the question: Discuss how media can influence children. Use specific examples to support your view.

Let’s look at how you put this together. Engages the reader’s interest with one or two general sentences (shown here in red). Then comes the thesis statement (shown here in blue). Then highlight what arguments the reader can expect in the body of the essay (here in green). Note we write our arguments in the order in which they appear in the body of the essay. So in this example the first body paragraph will be about diversity of media, the second body paragraph will discuss the positive aspects of television, the third body paragraph will examine the negative impacts of media on children and the fourth body paragraph will discuss how monitoring media usage is important.

The essay body itself is organised into paragraphs, according to your plan. Remember that each paragraph focuses on one idea, or aspect of your topic, and should contain at least 4-5 sentences so you can deal with that idea properly.

Each body paragraph has three sections. First is the topic sentence. This lets the reader know what the paragraph’s going to be about and the main point it will make. It gives the paragraph’s point straight away. Next – and largest – is the supporting sentences. These expand on the central idea, explaining it in more detail, exploring what it means, and of course giving the evidence and argument that back it up. This
is where you use your research to support your argument. Then there’s a *concluding sentence*. This restates the idea in the topic sentence, to remind the reader of your main point. It also shows how that point helps answer the question.

Let’s take a look at an example of a body paragraph using the media question. The topic sentence (in red) lets the reader know the paragraph’s point immediately – here, that media can have negative influences on children. The supporting sentences (in green) explain, explore and back up this idea. Note the in-text references (in orange) to show where the evidence is used.

The concluding sentence (in blue) then repeats and reinforces the point in the topic sentence – in this case, that media can have negative influences on children. Going through this process for each point in your argument gives your essay body. Once you’ve done this, you’ve done all the real work, since the body is where the argument happens. For this reason, many people find it’s easier to write the essay body first then the introduction. It’s much easier to summarise something that you’ve already written.

The last section of an academic essay is the *conclusion*. The conclusion should reaffirm your answer to the question, and briefly summarise key arguments. It doesn’t include any new points or new information.

A conclusion has three sections. First, repeat the thesis statement. It won’t use the exact same words as in your introduction, but it will repeat the point: your overall answer to the question. Then set out your general conclusions, and a short explanation of why they’re important. Finally, draw together the question, the evidence in the essay body, and the conclusion. This way the reader knows that you’ve understood and answered the question. This part needs to be clear and concise.

You can see the three sections in this example. The first restates the thesis (shown in red). The second section summarises the arguments and findings (shown in green). The third section is the final overall concluding statement (shown in blue).