

Creating an Essay Plan

An essay plan is one of the most helpful tools you can use to write your essay. 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 things is already done for you leaving you to focus on writing your argument in a clear and concise manner.
- Most importantly, an essay plan will help you to stay on track and stick to the point.

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 each of the paragraphs in your essay and 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. For example if you had a 2000 word essay, you may have an introduction and conclusion and four body paragraphs.

Remember:

- Assign a word count to each of your paragraphs so you know how much you are going to write (e.g a 2000 word essay might have an introduction and conclusion of c250 words and four body paragraphs of c400 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. For example in an essay discussing heritage policies in Ireland, it might be useful to position your paragraph on European legislation and how it informs the Irish policies first (the idea of going from big to small).
- Each body paragraph should introduce its central idea, provide information on this topic from the literature, and should include a critical evaluation/ review/ discussion. Identify these in short hand in your plan so you remember to include them in the essay.
- Develop the central idea with details, definitions, illustrations, comparisons, and contrasts.