

Writing the Extended Essay

The structure of the essay is very important. This is what helps students to organize the argument, to make best use of the evidence gathered.

The required elements of the final work to be submitted are listed here. More details about each element are given in the “Formal presentation of the extended essay” section.

Please Note: That the order in which they are presented here is not necessarily the order in which they should be written. Rather it is the order they will appear in the completed Extended Essay.

1. Title page
2. Content page
3. Abstract
4. Introduction
5. Body (development/methods/results)
6. Conclusion
7. Appendices
8. References and bibliography

Students should use the chosen system of academic referencing (Subject Specific) as soon as they start writing. That way, they are less likely to forget to include a citation. It is also easier than trying to add references at a later stage. Most modern word processors are helpful with this.

Some students draft the introduction first. If students do that, they must be prepared to revise it once the essay is complete.

The main task is writing the body of the essay, which should be presented in the form of a reasoned argument. The form of this varies with the subject of the essay but, as the argument develops, it should be clear to the reader what relevant evidence has been discovered, where/how it has been discovered and how it supports the argument. In most subjects, sub-headings within the main body of the essay will help the reader to understand the argument (and will also help the student to keep on track). Once the main body of the essay is complete, it is possible to finalize the introduction (which tells the reader what to expect) and the conclusion (which says what has been achieved, including notes of any limitations and any questions that have not been resolved).

Any information that is important to the argument should not be included in appendices or footnotes/endnotes. The examiner is not bound to read notes or appendices, so an essay that is not complete in itself will lose marks.

The remaining stages in writing the essay take time but are not difficult. Students need to check that they have cited sources for all material that is not their own, and that the citations are complete and consistent with the chosen referencing system. The bibliography should list only the sources used in the essay. The whole essay needs to be proof-read carefully (computer spelling and grammar checkers are useful but will not do everything). Pages must be numbered and the contents page must be completed.

The abstract is normally written last.