

## The American Academic Essay

Different cultures have different approaches to what is considered good writing. Think about your own culture:

- What makes good writing there?

The values of each culture are translated into writing. The American culture is straightforward and to the point, usually in a hurry, and in need of all the information NOW. Consequently, the American culture values writing that is direct, concise, and straight to the point. Successful writing is organized linearly and contains lots of details.

Therefore, the writer never implies anything, but instead directly explains everything for the reader. In essence, the writer is responsible for providing the reader with all the information that is needed. The reader's job is to just sit back, relax, and enjoy the essay you have written. Ask yourself:

- How does good writing in my culture differ from good writing in American culture?
- How much responsibility is given to the writer? To the reader?
- How might that interfere when I write my American academic essay?



Writing a good American Essay is like programming a computer. When a computer programmer feeds information into the computer, he must lay out every single step of the function in order for the computer to process the information. This is similar to writing an American essay. The writer must explain everything so that the reader clearly understands and has no questions about the writer's subject.

A reader will become confused, just as a computer will malfunction when it misunderstands because of missing information. If all of the information isn't explicitly presented, the reader will ask, "What does this mean?" The writer must explain all points thoroughly and offer proof by examples, illustrations, or documentation. For example, the reader should not have to ask what the purpose of the essay is or why the writer included a particular example or a particular paragraph.

## The Basic Framework of the American Essay

**Introduction:** Gets the readers' attention by giving background information on the topic and presents the thesis.

**Thesis:** Main idea of the essay: expresses an opinion, an idea, or a belief.

- It is generally positioned as the last sentence in the first paragraph.
- The thesis guides the rest of the essay, determining what information should be included.

**Body:** The writer determines the number of paragraphs needed to fully support the main idea of the essay. Each paragraph should include:

- A first sentence (topic sentence) that presents the point of the paragraph.
- Information that develops the topic sentence in a way that supports the thesis.

Paragraphs should be arranged to show a logical sequence of ideas. This can involve:

- Chronological order, order of importance, or spatial order
- Transitions: words or phrases that show a direct link to a prior idea. (Examples: Therefore, Similarly, On the other hand...etc.)

**Closing Paragraph:** Gives readers a sense of closure.

- Makes a final comment on the subject that reinforces the thesis but does not present new ideas or information
- Draws a conclusion about the thesis in a way that reinforces it.

Writing an American essay might make you feel as if you are doing something wrong because you are writing in a style that is different from what you are used to or different from what you have been taught. However, a writing style that is different is not necessarily wrong; it's just different. You must choose to incorporate a writing style that will meet the expectations of the culture for which you are writing.

**REMEMBER:** You have a choice when you write. Therefore, to be successful at writing an American academic essay, you must choose to follow the American guidelines.