An essay is an extended piece of writing that presents and supports a proposition or an argument: a thesis.

**Recommended procedure for essay writing**

The Better Essays program, which describes the 7-step plan, is a comprehensive guide to writing effective essays.

**7-step plan to writing an essay**

A 7-step plan is suggested below. Following each of these steps, and giving enough attention to each them, will guarantee a well-constructed 'reader-friendly' essay.

The 7-step plan:

- Analyse the brief (essay question)
- Formulate a provisional thesis statement
- Gather data (read, make notes)
- Organise data and ideas and reformulate thesis statement
- Write middle paragraphs
- Write introduction and conclusion
- Edit and proof-read.

**Academic writing practices**

**Non-discriminatory language**

Curtin University is committed to eliminating discrimination. Non-discriminatory language is also the convention in academic writing. For gender equity use plural form, they, them, their.

**Tone**

Tone is the "speaking voice" of a piece of writing. In academic writing it should be formal but "reader-friendly". Follow the conventions in your assignment requirements on the use of 'I'.

**Referencing**

There are referencing systems that must be followed. There are a few different systems that are commonly used, depending on the discipline. Find out which one is required by the School that has set your written assignment. Information about how to reference is often given in your course materials. Additionally, your lecturer may refer you to a guidebook or a particular journal that uses the system they prefer. Helpful referencing guides can be found on the Curtin Library website.

**Quoting**

Direct quoting means copying down material from a source and reproducing it word for word in your assignment. It is best to avoid overuse of direct quotations and instead paraphrase an idea in your own words (remembering to reference the source!). If you make any changes within a direct quote, or add explanatory material of your own, include it in square brackets [ ]. If you decide to leave out any part of the original use an ellipsis (...). Short quotations should be included within the text of your assignment and enclosed by quotation marks.
Quotations that are 40 words or more should be included as a separate paragraph from the main text, indented and maintain the same spacing as the rest of the paper.

**Paraphrasing**

It is important to support your thesis with evidence. This is done mostly through paraphrasing. Although paraphrasing is often described as ‘in your own words’, it is really ‘in your own voice’, where your stance on a topic is obviously from the evidence you select and the tone you use in conveying this evidence. Paraphrasing is not just changing word order of an original sentence, but it shows the reader that you understand its meaning and fits into the main idea of your paragraph. As with quoting, you must acknowledge the source/author when paraphrasing or summarising.

**Plagiarism**

If you do not carefully reference your work, you may leave yourself open to the charge of plagiarism - passing off other people’s ideas as your own. It’s the academic equivalent of fraud and is treated very seriously by the University.

**Your responsibilities**

Your responsibilities as a student writing an essay are:

- Make sure that you keep a copy of the completed assignment.
- Ensure that your assignment is submitted on time and reaches the person responsible for receiving it. Each School has their own rules regarding late assignments. If it appears you will not be able to hand in your assignment on the due date, discuss this with the marker before the day it is due.
- Read any feedback you are given carefully; this will assist you to improve your writing.

**Essay writing checklist**

1. Have you fulfilled the requirements of the assignment?
2. Are all facts correct, current, and unambiguous?
3. Have you correctly acknowledged all formal and informal sources correctly?
4. Is your thesis statement clear, concise, and arguable?
5. Are your paragraphs internally integrated?
6. Are your paragraphs logically linked?
7. Is your explication clear, easy to follow, and logically developed?
8. Does your introduction adequately introduce your thesis?
9. Does your conclusion effectively round off your essay?
10. Have you punctuated correctly?
11. Is your grammar correct?
12. Is your writing clear and unambiguous?
13. Is your writing concise?
14. Is the tone of your essay rational, authoritative, formal yet ‘reader-friendly’ and fluent?
15. Have you proof-read and run a spelling check over your essay?