

How to write a science essay



The steps to writing a science essay are much the same as any other type of essay: planning, research and analysis, outlining your ideas and then writing your prose. Once completed you need to edit your manuscript by carefully proofreading for content, context and format required by your instructor. Following a detailed discussion of each of these points, a discussion on the differences between science essays and other types of essays will be presented.

If you think of this first paragraph as an example, your first paragraph tells your reader what you're going to write about. Alternately, your first paragraph can be used to get your reader's attention with statements or statistics on your topic in order to focus the read into the urgency of your topic.

Planning

When planning your essay one of the first steps is making sure you understand the research question posed to you by your instructor or that you understand specifically what the topic is about. If not do some preliminary ground work to gain either the level of understanding you need to follow through on the essay or to clarify the topic. The planning phase is also a time to strategise how you will carry out the process and how much time you will need. The larger the essay, the more important the planning phase and the longer the lead time you will require. A well-researched 10, 000 word essay probably cannot be written the night before it is due; plan accordingly.

Research and analysis

While many individuals still use the library for research, the internet is also a source of great volumes of information. Depending on the area of science, professional organisations usually have websites with sections dedicated to publications as well as links to other websites that have professional sources of information. These are excellent sources of information. Additional sources available online include <http://scholar.google.com> or some of the professional academic databases. Try to stay away from general or generic websites such as www.wikipedia.com or www.ask.com as these are not considered valid sources for most university essays.

Once all of your references are gathered and read, analysing your research is critical in order to make proper sense of what you've read. Only then can you be assured you have enough material to answer the question posed or to support the type of question you are asking in your essay.

Preparing the outline

Your outline can be as detailed or as high level as you believe appropriate for your essay. Many people skip outline preparation as an essay writing step if they have no problem organising their thoughts; but for others, the outline serves as a roadmap and a method of staying focused. The outline should serve to assure all topical areas are covered, that the essay has a proper flow of information, that it effectively answers the question posed or discusses all aspects of the topic you wish to cover in an effective manner.

Writing the paper

One way of transitioning from the outline to the essay is by organising the research you've gathered by outline section or point covered. Summarising your reference material and stating how it relates to your topic are your next steps.

If you've not prepared an outline, your essay flow might resemble something like this:

- Introduction and background to the problem.
- Research question posed or topic selected
- Thematic presentation of the literature gathered on the topic or used to answer to the question.
- Discussion of how the material gathered relates to the topic or answers the question; perhaps how this relates to a specific area of professional practice.
- Conclusion summarising your essay.

Once again, if you've not prepared an outline, it is critical you work hard to stay focused in your essay. The larger the topic area the more you may be tempted to veer off course. A well written science essay is focused.

Proper essays require appropriate citations and referencing. There are many websites with formatting guides that accommodate MLA, APA, Harvard and just about any other format your instructor might request. Most science essays require either Harvard or AMA formatting. Be sure to check with your instructor for verification as many university professors will lower your grade if proper formatting is not followed.

Conclusion

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The conclusion should be a short recap of what you've written. You're essentially reminding the reader what you've told them and adding any concluding remarks you feel appropriate.

Proofreading and editing

Proofreading is essential! While it's tempting to turn in a paper after you write the last word, careful proofreading and editing can make the difference in your grade. If you are using a word processing program, first run your spell-check. It will likely remove most spelling errors and question detected grammatical errors. Once you complete your spell check you need to carefully read your paper one or more times for typos and spelling errors that are not picked up by your spell-check. Additionally, it is important to review your writing for sentences that may be too lengthy – shorten them. Tightening up your writing by eliminating jargon and wordiness make for a more effective and enjoyable essay.

How the science essay is different than others

The science essay is different than many other types of essays. For example, psychology, marketing, sociology, anthropology or even management essays will all have specific theories you can reference. However, for subject areas such as these the types of research you are likely to find are both a mix of qualitative and quantitative. For the science essay, the type of research you will most likely find is only quantitative – those dealing with statistics and hard facts. Unless asked for your opinion the science essay is not the place to deal in grey areas. In order to write a well regarded science essay stick

strictly to factual data and make sure you present your information in a similar fashion, factually.

More information on writing the effective essay, proper formatting guides, journal article analysis, research methodologies and essay examples can be found online.