Essay Structure

How do I structure an essay?

Student: Any tips on structuring an essay?

Mentor: It's pretty easy once you know it. Essays have three parts. A beginning, a middle and an end.

How do I structure an essay?

Beginning

Middle

End

Student: Ok. I see that’s what they mean by an introduction, body and conclusion.
Mentor: Yeah. But it's really important to have a structure or you lose the flow of your argument.

**How do I structure an essay?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce topic/context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outline main points</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structured paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main point in topic sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restate argument and sum up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State what this means</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student: I find writing an introduction quite hard. What do you put in it?
Mentor: You’ve got to put three bits in. Start by introducing the topic, then state your argument, then outline your main points.

Student: I see. Basically you’re just telling the reader what you’re going to say.

Mentor: Have a look at this introduction.

Sample essay introduction

Self confidence means possessing a positive yet realistic view of one’s self and abilities. Self confident people have trust and faith in their abilities. Self confidence can be affected by a variety of factors. This essay will argue that self confidence develops through a complex interaction between a range of factors. The essay will firstly define self confidence and then analyse the interaction between the various factors that affect the confidence of an individual. In particular these are personality style, situational factors/life experiences, self efficacy and self esteem.
Student: What goes in the body?

Mentor: It’s a series of paragraphs that all support the argument.

**What goes in the body?**

Mentor: Yeah. Put the main idea in the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.

Student: Do you just put one main idea in each paragraph?

Mentor: Yeah. Put the main idea in the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.

**What does the conclusion do?**
Student: I suppose the conclusion is like the introduction in reverse?

Mentor: You got it! You go from the detail of the essay out to the big picture. Here's an example of how to structure a conclusion.

**What does the conclusion do?**

1. Restate argument
2. Sum up what was covered
3. State what this means in relation to the broader topic or 'big picture'

Further Information

[http://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/2_AssessmentTasks/01essays.htm](http://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/2_AssessmentTasks/01essays.htm)