

Structuring essays

Consider the following whenever writing essays in science.

Before you start writing, read the question/information sheet that you have been given and write notes next to *all* of the things you have been asked to discuss.

Whatever the topic, an essay should be structured into 3 parts: an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion.

Introduction

Your introduction should include at least some of the following:

- A statement of the question
- Definitions of key terms
- Background information related to the topic that will not be covered in the main section, setting the topic in context
- A brief summary of what your essay will cover

Main body You need to think carefully about the structure of this before you write. You may like to consider:

- Splitting your writing into sections that contain similar ideas or discuss similar topics
- Using sub-titles for sections
- Using comparison tables, e.g. summarising advantages and disadvantages
- Using diagrams to make your ideas clearer

Conclusion Your conclusion should contain at least some of the following:

- A summary of the key points you have discussed
- A decision, e.g. if you were asked to compare whether one thing is better than another
- Your own opinion, e.g. if you have been discussing the pros and cons of something
- Food for thought – if you are working at a higher level, after you have summed up and made your conclusion, you might relate what you have been discussing to another area of science, the news, etc., and leave the reader with something to ponder.

In all sections, if you are working at a higher level (level 7 or 8), you should be thinking about backing up your statements with references, stating your sources either in the main text or in a bibliography at the end.