

Essay Checklist

An essay checklist that helps students plan, write and polish a clear, well-structured essay.

Understand the prompt

- Read the prompt twice and underline the key task words.
Words like analyze, compare or argue tell you what to do.
- Note the required length, format and due date.
- Identify the type of essay, such as argumentative or analytical.
- List any required sources or texts you must reference.
- Ask your teacher to clarify anything you are unsure about.

Build your thesis

- Decide your main point or position on the topic.
- Write a one-sentence thesis that is specific and arguable.
- Check that the thesis answers the prompt directly.
- Make sure you can support it with at least three points.
- Keep the thesis in view while you plan and write.

Plan the structure

- Sketch a quick outline: introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion.
- Assign one main idea to each body paragraph.
- Order the paragraphs so the argument builds logically.
- Note the evidence you will use in each paragraph.
- Plan smooth transitions between sections.

Write the introduction

- Open with a hook that draws the reader in.
- Give brief context the reader needs to follow your argument.
- End the introduction with your thesis statement.
- Keep it concise and avoid summarizing the whole essay.

Develop the body

- Start each paragraph with a clear topic sentence.
- Back every claim with specific evidence or examples.
- Explain how each piece of evidence supports your thesis.
- Cite quotes and sources where required.
- Use transitions to link ideas across paragraphs.
- Stay on topic and cut anything that doesn't serve the argument.

Write the conclusion

- Restate the thesis in fresh wording.
- Summarize the main points without repeating them word for word.
- End with a final thought, implication or call to reflection.
- Avoid introducing brand-new arguments here.

Proofread and submit

- Read the essay aloud to catch awkward phrasing.
- Fix spelling, grammar and punctuation errors.
- Check that every paragraph supports the thesis.
- Confirm formatting, citations and word count meet the requirements.
- Submit before the deadline and keep a saved copy.