ACE Quick Guide to Writing the Main Body

The main body is the **longest part** of your assignment: it follows your introduction and precedes your conclusion. This is where you **respond to the assignment brief** and **develop your arguments and ideas in detail.**

Breakdown of an Academic Assignment

Introduction	5 - 10% of word count
Main Body	80 - 90% of word count
Conclusion	5 - 10% of word count

(Please note, this is general guidance. Always confirm with your module tutor!)

Key Features of the Main Body

When writing the main body of your assignment, you should:

✓ Respond to the **assignment brief** and ensure you meet the **learning outcomes**.

✓ Divide your work into **clear sections** using **headings** (you can also use **sub-headings** if you are writing a report).

✓ Use **paragraphs** of **similar or equal length**. Each paragraph should have a **clear focus/function** that contributes to the overall development of your assignment.

✓ Provide **in-depth discussion**, **analysis and evaluation** of the topics/ideas/arguments covered.

✓ Draw on **scholarly literature** to support **main points/ideas/arguments**. You should also explore **alternative perspectives** and **counterarguments** where possible.

Structuring the Main Body

There are many different ways to structure the main body of your assignment. Your structure will be **dictated by what the assignment brief** is asking you to do.

Following these key steps will help you create a coherent structure:

Review the assignment brief: Break it down into sections and sub-sections.

Make a skeleton plan: Map out your sections and sub-sections on a planning document using headings and sub-headings. You can develop your ideas by creating a bullet pointed list of what you want to cover in each section/sub-section.

Allocate word count: Identify how many words you need for each section/sub-section. This information may be included in the brief. If not, use mark allocation to calculate word count.

Identify your paragraphs: Once you have developed your ideas and allocated your word count for each section/sub-section, you can divide your work into paragraphs. Each paragraph should have a clear focus/function (see **TEEEL paragraphs** on p. 3).

Refer to the brief: When making your plan, you should consistently consult the brief to ensure you are answering the assignment question and meeting the learning outcomes.

Use linking language: When writing your assignment, you should use relevant linking language to connect your points/arguments/ ideas and paragraphs. For example: 'as discussed above', 'additionally', 'subsequently', 'in comparison to', 'secondly', etc.

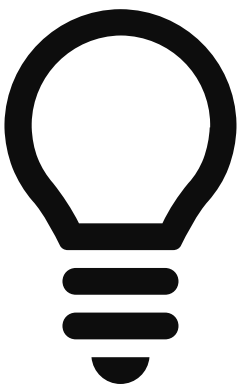**QA**

Structuring Paragraphs in the Main Body

Your main body should be constructed by paragraphs of similar or equal length (approximately 200-250 words). Many learners write paragraphs that are too short because they do not include sufficient analysis, or make their paragraphs too long as they develop several different points instead of focusing on one main idea.

To ensure you are writing fully developed paragraphs with sufficient evidence, analysis and evaluation, you can structure your paragraphs using the **TEEEL method**:

Topic	Clearly and succinctly tell the reader what the paragraph will be about.
Expand	Make sure your reader understands the main idea by providing further context, defining industry terms and / or relating it back to your experiences in the workplace.
Evidence	Incorporate some evidence to back up your main idea. This evidence should be a paraphrase supported by a reference to a scholarly resource. You should also consider the strengths and limitations of the evidence, demonstrating its potential value, coherence, or relevance.
Explanation	How does the evidence support or develop your argument? You should discuss the extent to which its findings apply to your organisation, include additional supporting evidence, or explore potential counterarguments where appropriate.
Link	Conclude your paragraph by either linking back to your main idea or linking forward to the next paragraph. You may also propose a recommendation.

(Adapted from University of West London, 2020)

Additional Tips

- Ensure you use **subject-specific terminology** outlined in the assignment brief throughout the main body.

- **Store the sources you use** - you may wish to refer to them later.

- **Check your work for weak points**, e.g. unjustified assumptions, lack of evidence, logical inconsistencies, repetition, uncertainty etc.

- **Proofread** your work to check for errors.

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Reference List

University of West London (2020) *Writing Critical Paragraphs*. Available at: https://www.uwl.ac.uk/current-students/support-current-students/academic-support/writing-critical-paragraphs (Accessed: 16 December 2024).

Additional Resources

The ACE Introductions and Conclusions Quick Guide offers advice on what to include in your introduction and conclusion respectively.

The ACE Quick Guide to Critical Writing: Building an Argument provides an in-depth guide to academic paragraph structure with a demonstration of the TEEEL method.

The ACE Quick Guide to Use of Sources examines how to synthesise source material into an academic argument and contains a phrase bank for engaging with scholarly ideas.

The ACE Quick Guide to Editing and Proofreading includes a checklist which can be used to assess your work prior to submission.

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