

Steps to Drafting Your Essay Summary Transcript

There are many different types of research papers and essays, so this video gives a general sense of steps you might take on the way to writing one.

First, analyze your assignment. What are you being asked to do? Analyze a piece of literature? Discuss strategies to mitigate food insecurity in Toronto during COVID-19? Compare and contrast two films, or two theorists, or two authors' works? Apply a specific theory or perspective to a situation, an issue, or a text? Try to figure out the expectations for this assignment.

Once you've done so, then start collecting data or evidence that's appropriate for your field and this paper.

- Collect your evidence and look for patterns in it. What are the major patterns? What fits together? What doesn't fit? What answers your question?
- Are you asked to apply a theory to an issue, situation, or text? Then read the theorist carefully and make sure you understand the concept thoroughly – and can describe the main points in your own words.

Organize your evidence by grouping similar pieces together, or by looking for a logical progression or sequence. This organization or sequence often forms the structure of the middle of your essay.

Write a question or draft thesis statement that's suggested by your evidence.

Draw a concept map or a rough outline or some form that gives order to the main points you want to make. Some people work better with a thorough outline of main points and smaller points; some work better from a drawing or map, some like to scribble down main points and their order on a scrap piece of paper. Have some idea of where you want to go, though, to lend some structure to the middle.

You don't have to begin writing with the introduction, as long as you have a draft thesis or a specific question you're trying to answer. Begin with the part you're most comfortable with. That may be the middle.

Work from the evidence you've collected. Gather all the evidence for one major point or argument, show us the evidence, then tell us what that evidence means.

Finish the middle, then draft your conclusions.

Go back and add the introduction. Revise your thesis statement to match the ANSWER you give in your CONCLUSION. Make sure the thesis and conclusion are consistent in content.

Check the structure of the middle for flow and organization. Professional writers add, delete, and move paragraphs and points around to create a smooth flow. At this point, check your paragraphing. Is each paragraph well-developed? Do you break paragraphs when you change topics? (See the video about Organizing Your Argument for more help with checking for flow and structure.)

Revise at the sentence level to make sure each sentence is a reasonable length. Each sentence should forward the action. Each sentence's meaning should also be clear. Your work is to ensure your readers do not have to work to understand your content.

Spell-check your work, ALWAYS. Use a grammar checker to test for grammar errors.

Proofread your paper. Check to make sure ALL citations are present in the text AND included in your Works Cited or References section. Read your paper out loud to make sure no words are missing and that the content makes sense.