

HOW TO ESSAY?

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<1>

What is an essay?

The research essay as an open form of an argumentative short text

“ Expressing ideas helps to form them. [...] In a real essay you're writing for yourself. You're thinking out loud.

Graham, P. (2002)
<http://www.paulgraham.com/essay.html>

An essay is not a seminar paper

Differences between essays and seminar papers

Essay

pick and defend a position

no index, no sub-headings

few and only short quotations

no tables or figures

length: 3-8 pages

Seminar paper

strive for objectivity

indexes, sub-headings

longer direct quotations possible

use tables and figures

length: 15-20 pages

<2>

Structuring the essay

Classical tripartite essay structure

(1) Introduction

clear question as a starting point for argumentation

(2) Main section

core arguments, structured by paragraphs

(3) Conclusions

need to follow from core arguments in main section

(1) Introduction

Topic and relevance

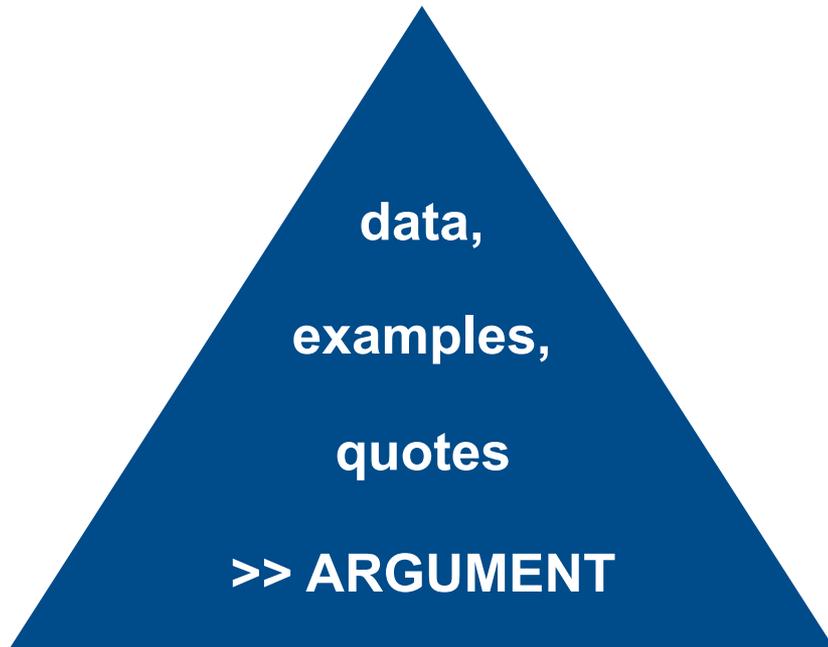
- ▶ Situation: why is the topic **relevant**?
- ▶ Complication: what is the thesis or **problem**?
- ▶ Solution: what **methodology** is applied?

(2) Main section

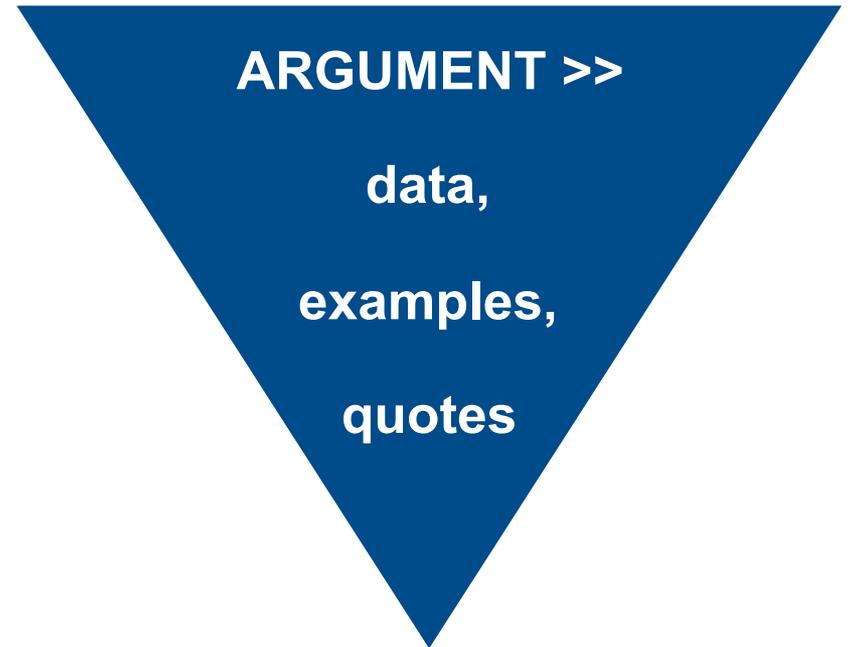
Arguments and proofs

- ▶ **One** argument, **one** (clearly recognizable) paragraph
- ▶ Paragraphs are linked by a **red** (argumentative) **thread**
- ▶ Different **structures** possible:
 - ▶ Thesis, followed by debunking **alternative** views
 - ▶ Juxtaposition of two contradictory theses
 - ▶ Synthesis of various stances
 - ▶ ...

(2) Main section: paragraph structure



pyramid



inverted pyramid

(3) Conclusions

- ▶ **Refer back** to initial question/problem
- ▶ What is the **unique contribution** of the essay?
- ▶ **Outlook** and further implications

<3>



Form

Less formal requirements for an essay when compared to a seminar paper

Necessary parts of the essay

- ▶ Title page (incl. author information)
- ▶ Quoting referenced literature (in main text)
- ▶ Reference list

Less formal requirements for an essay when compared to a seminar paper

Not part of an essay:

- ▶ Table of content, indexes
- ▶ Tables, figures
- ▶ Footnotes
- ▶ Descriptions of essay structure on the meta-level

<4>



Style

General Recommendations

- ▶ Simple language, short sentences
- ▶ Avoid flowery phrases and cliches
- ▶ Avoid acronyms
- ▶ Avoid passive tense whenever possible
- ▶ Use verbs, not nouns

Recommendations for essays

- ▶ Avoid redundancies
- ▶ Use quotes sparsely
- ▶ Provide facts and examples as proofs
- ▶ Take a stance

<5>



Your Essays

Essays on Organizing in Times of Crisis

- ▶ Focus on one aspect of organizing in times of crisis in assessing the case of the Covid19
- ▶ Focus on *one* question/thesis/insight/point
- ▶ Between 3-5 pages long (12pt, Times, 1.5 line spacing)
- ▶ Hand in essay as requested by the instructor

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