

Lesson plan: Structuring your essay

Timing	Content/Activity	Materials
Before the start	Warming up: students introduce themselves to each other and talk about their reasons for attending the workshop. In-curriculum this could be adapted to suit the situation – eg students talk about which essay title they’ve chosen, what progress they’ve made so far, etc	PPT – slide 1
0-2 mins	Intro and outline of workshop: Introduce yourself Explain that we are focusing on structuring but there will be elements of planning and writing/content in the session but in terms of how it links with structuring. At end of session I will point you to further complementary help for essay writing. Explain that we are using a “building” metaphor	Slides 2-3
2-5	What is a good structure? Ask students to count how many white triangles there are (slide 5). They should be able to answer it fairly quickly but not instantly. Show slide 6 and ask them how many black squares there are- answer should be much quicker. When the shapes are grouped it’s much clearer. This is illustrative of what we mean by a good structure. Common Ideas should be grouped together so the reader does not have to work as hard to make sense of your argument/answer to a question. (all circles- even different colour ones-could represent two sides of argument for example)	Slides 4-6
5-10	Creating an overall structure: all essays should have beginning- middle –and end. Don’t go through in detail the points now as we are going to go through each section separately. Just explain that the reader wants to know from the start where you are going (not a murder mystery). You need to know where you want to start and end and take the reader with you on this journey.	Slide 7
10-20	Laying the foundations: introductions Activity: Ask the students to read the two introductions and answer the questions on the slide. Then get them to feedback and go through what is good and less good about intros:	Slide 8-10 Introductionsandconclusions.docx



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both intros are well structured: starting broad, ending up at how they will answer question • Intro 2 is better as all the information is directly relevant to the question. They start with war reporting not reporting in general. • Both use a BBC guidelines quote but the second extract has found one specific to war reporting. • The second one also defines journalists in this scenario as embedded and unilateral rather than journalists in general <p>From points drawn out in discussion, summarise what should be in an intro. Make it clear it's not absolutely prescriptive- students have to decide what is important to their essay.</p>	Slide 9
20-25	<p>Building the main body: paragraphs:</p> <p>Briefly introduce idea of structure of individual paragraphs are important as is the order the paragraphs are structured in (how your ideas and argument builds). This section will cover both.</p> <p>Play 'Power of the Paragraph' video: https://vimeo.com/44666462 2mins 16 secs. Good explanation of structuring paragraphs. Video suggests stopping for students to read the paragraph but explain we are not going to do this because we are going to look at our own paragraph.</p> <p>Explain to students that there here are lots of acronyms that they may come across when reading advice about paragraph writing: SEE (as in video) AER (assertion –evidence-reasoning) DAE (Description- analysis – evaluation) in essence all the same thing, basically it means that each paragraph should ideally include main point, evidence, explanation, evaluation. There isn't a set order/structure for this but we'll look at an example to illustrate how it might work.</p>	Slide 11-12 https://vimeo.com/44666462 Slide 13
25-40	<p>Paragraphs Activity:</p> <p>Activity: In pairs, students are given cut out sentences that make up a paragraph. Students must put the paragraph together.</p> <p>Feedback and discuss with group why paragraph is structured in this way (I have put annotated</p>	Slide 14 Structuring paragraphs doc. Cut up into strips for students to rearrange – enough copies for students to work in small groups

	version for tutors in folder not for handout! Introductionsandconclusions - annotated.docx). Students can refer to final paragraph at end of their PowerPoint	Tutor can use annotated version for their own reference – don't share it with students Slide 15
40-45	Linking ideas/sentences: signalling words: Also show the writer has used clear signalling words to show the reader where they are going. For example, "and so" should mean the following part of the sentence is a consequence/effect of former part of sentence. Show table of other signalling words and their purpose (don't need to go through in great detail)	Slide 16-17
45-50	Extra paragraph example: This is just an extra example from a science discipline/not argumentative essay. If time you could show how doesn't matter what discipline or type of essay, the structure still works.	Slide 18
50-60	Finding your voice in the writing It can sometimes be difficult to know how to show what you think and your opinions without saying "I think..." but there are several ways you can do this within the structure of your writing. The writer will not use these techniques all the time in every paragraph. It is just a few ways to bring your voice to the foreground	Slide 19
60-70	Ordering paragraphs: Explain that as well as the order of sentences within paragraphs, the order you put your paragraphs is important. Go through slides. This starts with general intro as to what we mean by a good order, how they could plan this (slide 21-22) followed by paragraph plan (slide 23). Finally showing them that the order they decide will depend on type of essay (slide 24)	Slide 20-24
70-80	Topping out conclusions: Explain what generally goes in a conclusion. Activity: Ask them to read the conclusion and identify these elements if time! Quick group feedback about what they identified	Slide 25-27 Introductionsandconclusions.docx
80-85	The snag list: checking your structure Go through how students can check their structure	Slide 28-29
85-90	Further help/evaluation	Slide 30-33