

Nature of an essay:

An essay is a text freely written with the objective of exploring a novel idea. In this case, the challenge is to write an argumentative essay. Such essays are intended to propose and sustain a novel idea (phrased as a statement or thesis), which is based on a critical analysis of extant knowledge. It starts with an Introduction, proceeds to stating the arguments as the main body of the text, and ends with a conclusion.

As to the introduction:

An important piece of any essay is to have a clear departing question. So, what would be an interesting question you would like to offer an answer? After 1) introducing the topic, 2) its importance and 3) the departing question it is the moment to write 4) the proposed answer, i.e. your statement. Conversely, you may start by asserting your proposed answer moving on to the respective question, and why it matters.

As an example, let's consider an essay on the sustainability of a fully automated industrial system. It may start by briefly exposing the evolution of production systems from artisanship to machine to automated systems to autonomous systems. Then, this will allow to underline a common trend in this evolution: the motivation to increase productive efficiency, among other valuable features. Following this trend, it is reasonable to anticipate automation and autonomous productive systems will prevail. After this first idea, the text can then proceed to show some major advantages and disadvantages of extant human-based machine-assisted production as against machine-based human-assistant production. It will then question whether such systems' advantages outweigh disadvantages. This opens door for the leading question: How sustainable are fully automated productive systems? The introduction could end by stating "It is my conviction that a fully automated industrial economy is unsustainable". It is important that the statement is not tentative e.g. "A fully automated industrial economy might be unsustainable" because an argumentative essay is written to defend an idea.

As to the main body of arguments:

The most important part that gives substance to the statement is the argumentative section. In this section all the facts and evidence that supports the statement must be presented in an unequivocal way. As against a literature review, this part of the essay goes beyond documenting extant evidence as it may simply show the logical reasoning sustaining the proposed thesis. As a good practice, arguments should be evidence per section either by resourcing to subtitles or to end each subsection with a proposition.

Let's consider the same essay on the sustainability of fully automated production systems. As a first argument, the text could offer evidence of the role work performs besides being a source of income for individuals. E.g. it may highlight the psychological function it fulfils by offering a sense of identity, usefulness and meaningful activity, daily rhythms, or the guarantee every individual will feed economic activity due to their minimal work expenses (e.g. fixed costs of transportation, dressing, eating out). By accepting this important function, then, automation may deprive individuals from this and create psychological imbalances that ultimately undermine social cohesion. Thus, the proposition: P1 – Individuals will not find substitutes for work's psychological

function outside a regulated work activity. It is important that the core arguments are documented whenever possible (e.g. by citing relevant credible work).

As to the conclusion:

Very simply, the conclusion reviews the set of propositions made that build up the argumentative body in favor of the thesis / statement. It ends by reasserting the statement just like any lawyer would do when finishing arguing in a court of law.

General / formal guidelines

Please do not forget to cite all references within the text (e.g. “Work is much more than a simply bread winning activity, it is an important source of identity (Doherty, 2009).”, and include the respective reference in the references list, as follows:

Doherty, M. (2009). When the working day is through: the end of work as identity?. *Work, employment and society*, 23(1), 84-101.

This is APA format, as follows: Family name, 1st letter name (year). Title, journal title (in italics), volume (issue), first page-last page. You can use any other citing format as long it is consistent in the essay.