

## Writing Skills: History Essay Construction

**Introduction:** *this should be the map of your entire essay. It should present your position to the question, the definition of key ideas from the question, the ideas for discussion that will substantiate your position and reference to the period being discussed. A good introduction will inform your reader of the whole direction behind your work.*

### **Steps:**

1. Provide a response to the question via use of a thesis statement
2. Explain your position to the question by elaborating upon the thesis statement
3. Set the boundaries of the time period you are writing about
4. Define any key terms in the essay question- this will allow for your reader to be aware of exactly what you understand the task to mean
5. Provide the main points of discussion that will be covered in your essay – this tells the reader exactly what you will be examining in order to answer the question. It can also serve as a check-point for you, as once you have finished each body paragraph, you can check your next idea by what you have listed in the introduction.

**Body Paragraphs:** *This should always start with a topic sentence outlining what information will be in the paragraph. It should be consistent with the argument outlined in your introduction and include evidence as substantiation to your discussion points. The number of body paragraphs is not simply three. These will vary depending upon the level of analysis and depth of your answer. It will also depend on how much you can write within a specified time.*

### **Steps:**

1. Construct a thesis statement that introduces your main idea for the current paragraph
2. Elaborate upon your thesis, explaining the relevance of the idea to the topic of the essay
3. Provide an example that helps to substantiate/ prove your idea/ position
4. Present a concluding sentence that will end your discussion of the current point, but that will also introduce the new paragraph to follow.

**Conclusion:** *This is the last part of the essay, and as such it must provide a clear indication of what you know about the question, and it should reiterate the core components of your argument.*

**Steps:**

1. Do not include new information
2. Do not summarise with “As you can see I have, in conclusion I have discussed”, this is too simplistic a form of language for your level
3. Do not present your ‘closing ideas’ in the conclusion- all arguments and major discussion points should have been discussed from the outset- therefore it is not appropriate to state that your “findings are....”, instead, present a final statement of why your position is as affirmed now, as it was in the introduction.

**General points to remember:**

- Follow instructional terms carefully, these will direct you to the nature of the task at hand
- Keep language formal, and suited to the tone of the task- avoid emotional language in your work
- Reserve personal judgement/ opinions for class discussions; if it can't be substantiated by a Historian/ expert, then leave the commentary out of your final piece
- Always read widely to ensure as that as much depth as possible is transferred into your answers
- Referencing is a must! Failure to acknowledge the work of a scholar, or work that is not your own will end in a zero grade. This is called plagiarism and it is forbidden in this subject
- Analysis is essential for strong results; this means extending your ideas beyond the re-telling of the historical narrative, and provided an insightful argument instead.
- A quote, if used correctly, will help to strengthen your response

History essays, for our purpose, are 45 minutes in length. You must then factor in how long a conclusion and body paragraphs will take you to write. As a guide, a strong introduction that addresses the question and outlines your argument could take around 7 minutes, a fair conclusion that summarises the topic could take 3 minutes. This would then allow 35 minutes for the construction of your body paragraphs.