Components of a Good Essay

An essay is a piece of writing that is written to convince someone of something or to simply inform the reader about a particular topic. In order for the reader to be convinced or adequately informed, the essay must include several important components to make it flow in a logical way. The main parts (or sections) to an essay are the intro, body, and conclusion. In a standard short essay, five paragraphs can provide the reader with enough information in a short amount of space. For a research paper or dissertation, however, it is essential that more than five paragraphs are present in order not to overwhelm the reader with too much information in one paragraph.

Intro:
- Must contain an attention grabber for the reader or at least make the essay sound interesting, may begin with a quote about the particular topic
- Ensure that the intro moves from the general to the specific in regards to the topic
- Provides the reader with a “road map” of the essay in a logical order
- At the end there should be what is called a thesis statement, arguably the most important component of the intro
- The thesis statement states the aim of the paper and may give insight into the author’s examples and evidence

Body:
- Includes the evidence and support of the paper in addition to the author’s ideas
- Paragraphs must include a topic sentence which relates the discussion back to the thesis statement
- Logical ordering of ideas: 3 types of order
  1. Chronological order—order of time, good for narratives
  2. Spatial order—good for descriptions of locations; top to bottom, e.g.
  3. Emphatic order—least important to most important; most common for college writing
- Ensure that transition sentences are present to create a good flow to the essay
- Include substantial examples and evidence to support your argument and remember to cite, cite, cite!
- Make sure each example is relevant to your particular topic

Conclusion:
- This section should wrap all of your arguments and points
- Should restate the main arguments in a simplified manner
- Ensure that the reader is left with something to think about, particularly if it is an argumentative essay

Always remember to allow time to rewrite the first draft of your essay and, then, to proofread it before turning it in. For help, visit the Writing Center!