What is an essay/written response?

An essay is a written response that is presented as a short piece of academic writing on a particular subject. An essay can have many purposes, but the basic structure is always the same. Written responses that require an essay answer are often found in Unit Assessments in the courses offered at CSU.
Steps to writing an essay

Writing can be a daunting task for many students, but with some direction, writing an essay can be a breeze. Follow these simple steps, and you will have an essay in no time!
Steps to writing an essay

1. Decide on your topic (which is most often given to you).
2. Organize your ideas.
   • This can be as an outline, list, or idea in your head.
3. Write your thesis statement.
   • Your thesis statement is the sentence that tells your reader the main focus of your essay.
4. Write the introduction.
5. Write the body.
6. Write the conclusion.
7. Proofread your paper and add the finishing touches.
What does an essay consist of?

All essays should consist of the following components:

Introduction

Body

Conclusion
The Introduction Paragraph

The introductory paragraph is the first paragraph of your essay. The introductory paragraph:

- Captures the interest of the reader
- Tells why the topic is important
- Introduces the main idea
  - Main idea is known as a *thesis statement*
    - Most important sentence of the essay
    - Explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper
    - Lets the reader know what the essay is going to cover
Introduction paragraph example

"A dog is man's best friend." That common saying may contain some truth, but dogs are not the only animal friend whose companionship people enjoy. For many people, a cat is their best friend. Despite what dog lovers may believe, cats make excellent house pets as they are good companions, they are civilized members of the household, and they are relatively low maintenance.

**The thesis statement is underlined.**
The Body

The body of the essay explains, describes, or argues the chosen topic.

- The strongest and most relevant topic should be presented first.
- All information in the body paragraph(s) should directly support the thesis sentence.
- The information provided in the body paragraph(s) should sufficiently answer the question asked of you, if applicable.
- The final sentence of the last paragraph in the body should close the paragraph and smoothly transition into the conclusion.
The Body cont.

- Body example

First of all, people enjoy the companionship of cats. Many cats are affectionate; they will snuggle up and ask to be petted, or scratched under the chin. Who can resist a purring cat? If they are not feeling affectionate, cats are generally quite playful. They especially enjoy playing when their owners are participating in the game. Contrary to popular opinion, cats can be trained. By using rewards and punishments, just like with a dog, a cat can be trained to avoid unwanted behavior or perform tricks.

Secondly, cats are civilized members of the household. Unlike dogs, cats do not bark or make other loud noises. Most cats do not even meow very often. They generally lead a quiet existence. Cats do have claws and owners must make provision for this. A tall scratching post in a favorite cat area of the house will often keep the cat content to leave the furniture alone. As a last resort, of course, cats can be declawed. In addition, cats are not high maintenance pets and do not require much attention.

Lastly, one of the most attractive features of cats as house pets is their ease of care. Cats do not have to be walked. They get plenty of exercise in the house as they play, and they do their business in the litter box. Cats also take care of their own grooming. Bathing a cat is almost never necessary because under ordinary circumstances, cats clean themselves. In addition, cats can be left home alone for a few hours without fear. Unlike some pets, most cats will not destroy the furnishings when left alone. They are content to go about their usual activities until their owners return.
The Conclusion

The main purpose of the conclusion is to restate the main ideas.

- Reminds the reader of the topics covered
- Reiterates the most important evidence supporting the information presented
- Provides a forum for the writer to persuade the readers to his/her viewpoint
- Ties together all loose ends
Conclusion example

Cats are low maintenance, civilized companions. People who have small living quarters or less time for pet care should appreciate these characteristics of cats. However, many people who have plenty of space and time still opt to have a cat because they love the cat’s personality. In many ways, cats are the ideal house pet.
### Transition words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To show addition:</th>
<th>In addition, moreover, next, also, besides, further, furthermore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To give examples:</td>
<td>For example, for instance, in fact, specifically, that is, to illustrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compare:</td>
<td>Also, in the same manner, likewise, similarly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To contrast:</td>
<td>However, although, despite, on the other hand, yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To summarize or conclude:</td>
<td>In conclusion, in summary, therefore, all in all, to sum up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show time:</td>
<td>As soon as, subsequently, earlier, during, before, at last, after, afterward, immediately, since, thereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show place or direction:</td>
<td>above, below, beyond, close, elsewhere, farther on, here, nearby, opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To indicate logical relationship:</td>
<td>Accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this reason, hence, if, otherwise, since, so, then, therefore, thus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Supporting Evidence

- When writing an essay, you will want to provide supporting evidence.
  - It reaffirms your main arguments
  - Is meant to *support* rather than *replace* your argument
  - Directly quoted material should not exceed more than 20% of your writing
Supporting Evidence cont.

- When providing supporting evidence, you will want to use *credible* sources.
  - Textbooks; magazines; online journals; electronic databases; newspapers; CREDIBLE websites

- Some sources that are *not* considered credible:
  - Wikipedia; encyclopedias; friends; family, or yourself

- Use proper APA citation when citing your sources. Please review the APA Guide for further information.
Supporting Evidence cont.

- Supporting evidence should be properly incorporated.
  - Interpret the information and do not “plop” it into your essay.
  - Direct quotes should not stand alone.
  - Supporting evidence should be clear and easy to understand.
  - Do not use vague statements or statistics.
Proofreading and Revisions

- Finally, read your essay aloud upon completion and ask yourself questions.
  - Is my essay in order?
  - Do I need to add sentences?
  - Are there any ideas I would like to add?
  - Do I like my intro, body, and conclusion?

- Re-read any revisions made.
  - Check spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
  - Revise at LEAST 3 times.
  - Re-read your essay until you are comfortable enough to submit it.
We hope you have enjoyed this small presentation about writing an effective essay/written response. Should you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact the CSU Success Center @ 1-877-875-0533 or by email @ TEAMSUCCEED@COLUMBIASOUTHERN.EDU. Remember that the Success Center is here to help you SUCCEED in everything you do!