

**E-Guide**

# **Essay Structure and Planning**



## **Techniques for Success**

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# Contents

**Introduction.....P. 3**

**Basic Structure.....Pp. 4 - 7**  
with examples

**Diamond Structure.....P. 8**  
with visual

**PEE/PEEL/PEELC.....Pp. 9 - 16**  
with examples

**WEED.....Pp. 17 - 19**  
with examples

**Outlining and Planning...Pp. 20 - 28**  
with examples

**Reference List.....P. 29**

**Bibliography.....P. 30**

# Introduction

This easy-to-read guide has been created to help you plan and structure your essays better. It will take you through several methods, with examples, that you can apply to your own academic writing.

Please don't be put off by the page count. Text is large and spaced out, and each section has in-text examples to demonstrate how the different structures look when applied in academic writing.

This guide should *not* be referenced in your assignments. However, you can find a handy selection of academic resources in the Bibliography at the end of this guide.



# Basic Structure

## TITLE/QUESTION

This is what your essay is about. You might have been given a specific question to answer or a topic to write about. At HE, this can also mean that you'll have a specific subject to write about but you need to write your own title. This is especially the case for dissertations, e.g.

### **Essay Instruction Given:**

Assignment 1 - Essay on Liminal Space.

### **Title on Specific Essay Topic You've Chosen:**

Ritualistic Sacrifice and Identity Transformation:  
Investigating Liminal Spaces in Islamic 'Aqiqah'  
Naming Ceremonies.

**Note:** Designing an essay title when you don't have an explicit question to answer is easier than you may think! Look at the guidance you've been given, e.g. Liminal Space, use the context from your subject area classes e.g. Theology, Performing Arts, Psychology, and name the specific topic you'll be writing about, e.g. 'Aqiqah' naming ceremonies.

# Basic Structure, cont.

## INTRODUCTION

This is where you introduce the topic, explain the function of the essay [what it's going to do] and write a summary of your main argument. Mention key points and terminology that are important to the assignment - you don't have to go into a lot of detail here, that's what the essay is for. Finish with a brief version of your essay conclusion, e.g.

### ***Introduce the topic***

The Cha-Cha is a Latin dance with Caribbean origins; however, its popularity with Western audiences has been argued to come at the cost of sterilising its cultural heritage.

### ***Explain the function of the essay, using key words***

This essay will critically analyse the impact of 'white-washing' on the evolution of the Cha-Cha and evaluate the influence this has had on modern perception values of 'Professional' vs 'Cultural' Cha-Cha dancers,

### ***Finish with a brief version of your essay conclusion***

finding that modern-day commercial packaging of not only the Cha-Cha, but other similar Latin dances, has led to modern Western audiences possessing expectations of correctified and simplified technique at the cost of Afro-Latino cultural erasure and exoticism.

# Basic Structure, cont.

## BODY

The body of the essay is where you develop the argument your essay is making.

The first paragraph should focus on the specific issue you mentioned in the introduction. This is your opportunity to provide context for the rest of your essay.

The following paragraphs should always link to the paragraph that comes directly before it to show how you've moved from one point to the next, e.g.

### End of Paragraph 3...

Therefore, wind turbines are a feasible tool for sourcing clean energy.

### Beginning of Paragraph 4...

However, wind turbines are not the only option in finding a solution to achieving carbon neutrality. In fact, Solar Power has grown in popularity in recent years due to...

Once you have used the previous paragraph's topic as a transitional link to the next point, **then** you can write more about the next point in depth.

# Basic Structure, cont.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion is the final section of your essay before your Bibliography and/or Reference List. This section should **not** contain any new information.

### Conclusion structure:

- Summarise your main argument like you did in the introduction.
- Mention the main points that your essay covered which *support* your main argument.
- State what your conclusions are.
- Explain clearly why your conclusions are important.
- Link your findings back to the title of the essay/the question the essay was asking.

### Example

This is the main argument the essay is making, and this sentence explains what the argument is and mentions any key points or terminology. This is a point which supports the main argument in this essay. This is another vital point supporting the main argument. The conclusion is that the argument made in this essay is the right one to make. These are the reasons why this argument is the right one to make and why it's important and relevant *now*. In fact, the points supporting the argument answer the question the essay was asking by providing contextual evidence which prove the argument right.

# Diamond Structure

Diamond Structure is an essay structure method for breaking your essay down in to easy to digest pieces. Look at the image of the diamond and imagine that this is what your essay looks like.



The Introduction is a separate point at the beginning of the essay.

Introduction

The Introduction and Conclusion are separate because they have their own structure and purpose in relation to the Main Body.

The Main Body is the widest part of the Diamond because it's the biggest section.

Main Body of the Essay

This is where you develop the argument you're making using paragraph structures like PEEL or WEED.

The Conclusion is also a separate point from the main body of the essay.

Conclusion

# PEE/PEEL/ PEELC

This section aims to give you an paragraph structure model which you can build upon. Each version gets slightly more complex, and presents a simple way to build up the quality of your academic writing. There are several benefits to writing this way, some of which are:

- By following this structure, your understanding of your subject area will improve because in order to write this structure correctly, you have to think and write about your subject in a deeper and more meaningful way.
- Learning this structure will help you to understand academic writing sources easier because you can identify and break down the argument/s being made.
- Using structures such as this will make your academic writing easier to follow and understand for the examiner.



With that in mind, *let's dive in!*

## TOP TIP

If image association is something that works for you, you can remember the PEEL method by imagining fruit being peeled.



# PEE/PEEL/PEELC, cont.

## PEE

The first version of this paragraph structure we're going to look at is PEE, which stands for Point Evidence Explanation. It's the simplest of the three structure we'll be looking at in this section and it is a good introduction to improving your academic writing skills.

### **Point -**

This is the beginning of the paragraph where you introduce your reader to the point you're making.

### **Evidence/Examples -**

This is the middle of the paragraph where you provide evidence and/or examples to back up the point you just made. This evidence should come from academic resources such as textbooks or journals. Examples can also come from experiences and events which occurred during practical assignments in the case of Reflective Writing assignments.

### **Explanation -**

This is the end of the paragraph where you explain how the evidence and/or examples you provided are relevant and how they support the point you made at the beginning of the paragraph.

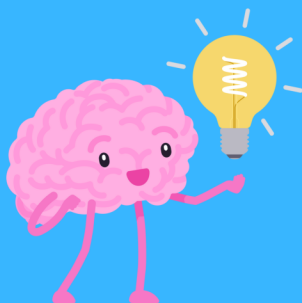
# PEE/PEEL/PEELC, cont.

## PEE EXAMPLE

Below is an example paragraph of putting PEE into action.

### Point

Cats are better than dogs.



### Evidence/Example

One of the ways in which cats are superior to dogs is their brains. In fact, cats have nearly double the amount of neurons in their brains than dogs do (Trends in Cognitive Science: cited in, Douglas, 2009, pp. 32 - 37).

### Explanation

This is a significant measure of how cats surpass their canine counterparts intellectually as neurons in the cortex are part of something called the 'executive brain' (Trends in Cognitive Science: cited in, Douglas, 2009, pp. 32 - 37) which is where the brain processes information. Having more neurons here means that cats can process information faster.



# PEE/PEEL/PEELC, cont.

## PEEL

Building on the structure we learned from PEE, PEEL has the added section 'L'. This stands for 'Link'. A PEEL paragraph has 4 sections to it, these are:

### **Point -**

This is the beginning of the paragraph where you introduce your reader to the point you're making.

### **Evidence/Examples -**

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> section of the paragraph where you provide evidence and/or examples to back up the point you just made. This evidence should come from academic resources such as textbooks or journals.

### **Explanation -**

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> section of the paragraph. Here is where you explain how the evidence and/or examples you provided are relevant and how they support the point you made at the beginning of the paragraph.

### **Link -**

This is the 4<sup>th</sup> and final section of the paragraph. This section should show how the points you're making are connected. There are two options. Link:

- This paragraph to the next paragraph
- This paragraph to your main argument, which should be at the beginning of your essay

# PEE/PEEL/PEELC, cont.

## PEEL EXAMPLE

Here's an example building onto the PEE example, adding the Link.

### Point

Cats are more intelligent than dogs.

### Evidence/Example

One of the ways in which cats are smarter than dogs is their physical brain composition. In fact, cats have nearly double the amount of neurons in their brains than dogs do (Trends in Cognitive Science: cited in, Douglas, 2009, pp. 32 - 37).

### Explanation

This is a significant measure of how cats surpass their canine counterparts intellectually as neurons in the cortex are part of something called the 'executive brain' (Trends in Cognitive Science: cited in, Douglas, 2009, pp. 32 - 37) which is where the brain processes information. Having more neurons here means that cats can process information faster.

### Link

Furthermore, cats' intelligence can be measured in how they communicate in manipulative ways in comparison to dogs.

Note: The Link indicates that the next paragraph will be about the function of cats' communication skills.

# PEE/PEEL/PEELC, cont.

## PEELC

Building on the structure we learned from PEE and PEEL, PEELC has the added section 'C'. This stands for 'Critically Analyse'. A PEELC paragraph has 5 sections to it, these are:

### **Point -**

This is the beginning of the paragraph where you introduce a new point.

### **Evidence/Example -**

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> section where you provide evidence/examples from academic resources.

### **Explanation -**

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> section where you explain how the evidence/examples you just gave are important and relevant to the point you made at the beginning of the paragraph.

### **Link -**

This is the 4<sup>th</sup> section where you link this paragraph to either the next paragraph, or link it back to the main argument.

### **Critically Analyse -**

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> section - it doesn't have to come at the end, it can be part of section 3 or 4 as well. This is where you should make a critical point about the evidence you've used, e.g. the research is old, etc.

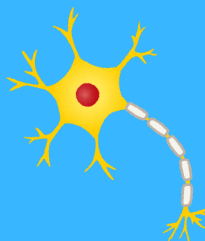
# PEE/PEEL/PEELC, cont.

## PEELC EXAMPLE

This example builds on PEEL to include Critical Analysis. Remember, although it can be, the Critical Point **doesn't have to be** at the end of the paragraph.

### Point

Cats are more intelligent than dogs.



### Evidence/Example

One of the ways in which cats are smarter than dogs is their physical brain composition. In fact, cats have nearly double the amount of neurons in their brains than dogs do (Trends in Cognitive Science: cited in, Douglas, 2009, pp. 32 - 37).

### Explanation

This is a significant measure of how cats surpass their canine counterparts intellectually as neurons in the cortex are part of something called the 'executive brain' (Trends in Cognitive Science: cited in, Douglas, 2009, pp. 32 - 37) which is where the brain processes information. Having more neurons here means that cats can process information faster.



*PEELC example continued on next page.*

# PEE/PEEL/PEELC, cont.

## PEELC Example, cont.

This example builds on PEEL to include Critical Analysis. Remember, although it can be, the Critical Point **doesn't have to be** at the end of the paragraph.

## Critical Analysis

However, cats' functional intelligence isn't all-inclusive, as they have shown to 'not show causal understanding in a string-pulling task' (Whitt, et al., 2009, pp. 739 - 743) where they were tasked to pick between a plain string and one with food on the end. Dogs, in comparison, succeeded in picking the string with the reward on it.

## Link

Another way in which cats' intelligence can be measured in how they communicate in comparison to dogs.

Note: The Link indicates that the next paragraph will be about the function of cats' communication skills.



# WEED



Similar to PEEL, WEED is another method for structuring your paragraphs and making sure you have everything you need in the paragraph:

## **W = WHAT**

What is the point being made in this paragraph? Have you briefly explained the main point or topic of this paragraph in clear terms?

## **E = EVIDENCE**

In the next part of the paragraph, provide supporting or contrasting evidence from academic sources. Make sure that any evidence you use is cited and referenced. Evidence shouldn't just be your personal opinion.

## **E = EXAMPLE**

Here is where you present a specific example/s of the evidence you provided in action. For example, if you provided evidence of a theory that's used in classrooms, this is where you'd cite a specific case study which applied the theory practically.

## **D = DO**

This is where you analyse the evidence/example given - you *do* something with the information and answer why it's important/relevant to the question you're answering/the argument you're making. Link the analysis to the next paragraph or the main topic.

# WEED, cont.

## WEED Example

This example shows you what the WEED method looks like in action.

### W = WHAT

Subcultures and Countercultures both exist within a larger dominant culture serving as a rebellion against the popular norm. Despite this similarity, they are not the same.

### E = EVIDENCE

The classification of Subcultures and Countercultures as different groups could be argued to be defined by one primary function, which is ‘the strong desire to change the dominant culture’ (Cusick, 2022, p.1). Countercultures are ‘formed around interests, dislikes, and disdain.’ (ibid) in comparison to subcultures, such as Metal, which are based on shared symbols which ‘differentiate themselves’ (ibid) from the popular norms and experience outside labelling which others them (Conner, 2022, p.1).



*[Example continued on the next page].*

# WEED, cont.

## WEED Example, cont.



### **E = EXAMPLE**

For instance, the Civil Rights Movement in 1950s America (Carson, 2025, p.1) is an example of a counterculture as the movement was built around the shared interest of black people possessing the same, equitable social and political freedoms and human rights as their white counterparts (ibid).

### **D = DO**

The people involved in the American Civil Rights Movement were specifically unified by their desire to bring about change to the dominant culture in which racial segregation was the norm (Library of Congress, 2025, p.1), thereby cementing its status as a counterculture. Furthermore, it would be reasonable to determine that the difference between countercultures and subcultures is not necessarily desire to change what is popular and dominant in a given society, but rather the difference between action and inaction in relation to this desire.



# Outlining and Planning



## Outlining Your Assignment

Making notes of the important points you need to cover in your assignment. It can be helpful to outline for several reasons, such as:

- You'll have a list of everything you need to include before you create your assignment. This will help you not to miss anything.
- You can show an outline to your tutors/success and achievement coaches to get feedback and make sure the order of points makes sense.
- You can easily rearrange the order and make necessary changes before doing your assignment, which saves work later on.

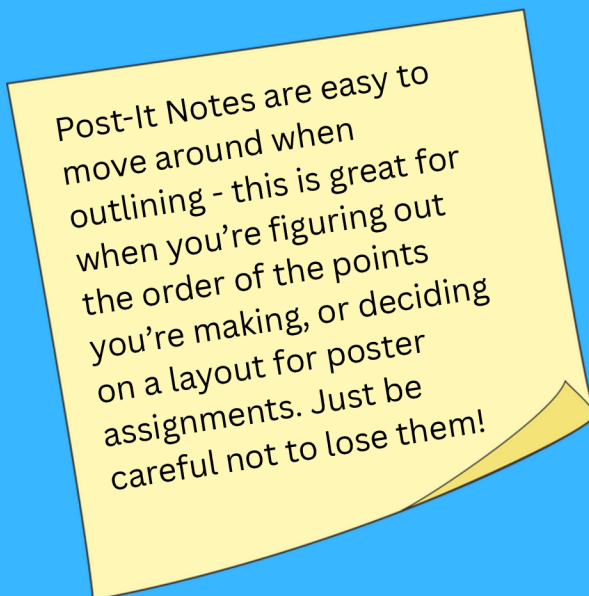
Outlining can look like a bullet-point checklist, just like what you can see on this page. Some examples of other ways you can outline will be covered later on in this section of the guide.

# Outlining and Planning, cont.



## Outlining Methods That You Can Use

- Bullet point lists.
1. You can also use numbered lists - this can be helpful for putting the points you need to address in your assignment in order.



# Outlining and Planning, cont.

## Outlining Methods That You Can Use

You can also use essay structures like the ones mentioned earlier in this guide to outline, **e.g.**



### Introduction -

Introduce the concept of spiral curriculums. Explain how the essay will critically analyse the benefits and alternative curriculum styles.

### Paragraph 1 -

Spiral curriculums - benefits with examples, use PEEL throughout essay

### Paragraph 2 -

Spiral curriculums - criticisms - when it's not implemented correctly...

### Paragraph 3, etc. -

Alternative styles of curriculums. Positives and negatives. Contrast to spiral.

### Conclusion -

Recap main argument about spiral curriculums and the information in the essay. State conclusion and why it's important to the current state of education. 22

# Outlining and Planning, cont.



## Planning Your Assignment

The difference between planning and outlining is that planning includes the bigger picture around your assignment, such as booking 1-1s and managing the research and creation of your assignment within the timeframe you have before the hand-in. In this respect, outlining is part of planning.

## What Planning Can Look Like

- Looking at the Learning Objectives [LOs] and Marking Criteria, using this to decide the content of your assignment i.e. if the LOs say that you should be analysing a specific theory, that can help you to plan what you need to research and which key theorists and scholars you need to reference in your assignment.
- Making a timeline for working on your assignment
- Deciding on specific dedicated days/times to research and work on your assignments.
- Booking 1-1s in advance with your Programme Leaders/Tutors and/or the Academic Achievement Coach to discuss the progress of your assignment and what you can develop further.

# Outlining and Planning, cont.



## Planning Your Assignment - Examples

In this section, you will find examples of planning that you can use as a template for planning your assignments.

### Using LOs to Plan:

Assignment 2: Essay.

This essay should meet Learning Objectives 2 & 3.

LO2: Analyse foundational performance techniques through the lens of Konstantin Stanislavski's system of acting.

LO3: Reflect on the creative and interpretive processes within the context of Naturalism in theatre.

### How to Plan Using This Information

- Identify key instructions. In the example above, these are: 'analyse' and 'reflect'.
- Identify key terminology. This could be subject-specific theories, policies, movements, techniques and practitioners, to name a few. In the example above, these are: 'foundational techniques', 'Konstantin Stanislavski', 'creative and interpretive processes' and 'Naturalism'.

# Outlining and Planning, cont.



## Using LOs to Plan, cont. :

This section is continuing from the previous page.

### How to Plan Using This Information, cont.

- Now that you've got the key instructions and terminology, you can use this list as the main focus points that you should research for your assignment.
- Using this information, you can now plan outwards by finding connected points and terminology, **e.g.**



# Outlining and Planning, cont.



## Using LOs to Plan, cont. :

This section is continuing from the previous page.

### How to Plan Using This Information, cont.

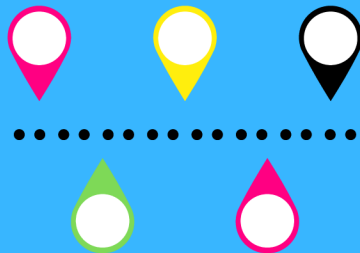
- Repeat this connected points exercise for each key terminology.
- Refine the connected points for each key terminology. Prioritise which points you're going to write about based on the LOs and the essay/paragraph structure you're going to use.

E.g.

Stanislavski - sociopolitical context = late 1800s-early 1900s Russia, founder of naturalistic acting, go over his method - 'foundational techniques' = emotion memory, share example of this in his time and modern times, add criticisms of the method and alternative ways of achieving naturalistic performance.

- Once you've refined each of the points for both Learning Objectives, you can use the key instructions to plan **how** you're going to write about the information you've found to achieve the LOs, i.e. you'll 'analyse' the information using PEELC paragraph structure.

# Outlining and Planning, cont.



## Creating an Assignment Timeline

Creating a timeline for assignments is a useful time management tool. Make sure to count the weeks you have between getting the assignment and the submission deadline. You should also put aside time that is specifically dedicated to your assignments so that you can keep up-to-date with the timeline.

## Timeline Template

### Week 1:

Receive assignment - **note the hand-in deadline.**  
Break down the LOs - what do they want? If relevant, research options for topics you could do the assignment on.

### Week 2:

Choose your topic. Conduct research on the key points - ask Learning Centre staff for resource recommendations. Book a 1-1 with tutor for Week 4.

### Week 3:

Research connected ideas for the key points. Outline assignment. Book 1-1 with Academic Achievement Coach [AAC] for Week 5.

### Week 4:

Have 1-1 with tutor. Use feedback to refine outline. Start writing assignment. Book another 1-1 with tutor for 2 week's time (week 6).

# Outlining and Planning, cont.



## Creating an Assignment Timeline

Continued from previous page.

## Timeline Template, cont.



### Week 5:

Have 1-1 with AAC - this will identify areas for development in your academic writing that you can work on in your assignment. Use feedback to improve your assignment. Continue working on assignment. Book a follow-up 1-1 with AAC for 2 week's time [week 7].

### Week 6:

Have 1-1 with Tutor. Use feedback to continue working on and refining your assignment. Send AAC your assignment so far in preparation for next week's 1-1.

### Week 7:

Have 1-1 with AAC: Proofread assignment together. Use feedback to make any final tweaks to your assignment.

### Week 8:

Hand-in assignment. Take a breath. Well done, you finished it and got it handed in! Woo-hoo!



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