

— Outlining and Planning the Essay Structure

Exercise 3

Essay Structure: Some Typical Formats

As you take notes for a DBQ, you should also think about the overall structure of your essay. By “structure,” we mean the way all the paragraphs in your essay are organized. Four essay-structure formats are summarized in the boxes on the right here. All of these formats follow a single basic pattern: 1) an introductory paragraph presents the thesis; 2) two or more internal paragraphs present the main ideas and key points; 3) a final paragraph concludes. The only thing that changes from one format to the next is how the internal paragraphs are organized.

Which essay format you choose depends on the type of question you have been asked. On the left are the four question types you studied in Lesson 3. In the spaces provided in the boxes on the right, indicate the question type best suited to the essay format described. As a class, discuss your choices.

Question Types

Essay-Structure Formats

1. “Assess the Validity”

As in this question: “The colonists could not have won the Revolutionary War without the leadership of General Washington.” Assess the validity of this statement.

2. “Compare and Contrast”

As in: Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the colonists and the British in the American Revolution.

3. “Explain Why” or

cause/effect

“Explain to what extent”

As in: Explain why the colonists won the Revolution in spite of Great Britain's superior numbers and military strength.

4. “Describe the Changes,” or “Describe and Explain”

As in: Describe how colonial attitudes toward the British shifted from 1763 to 1776, and explain why these changes took place.

change over time

Format A Question Type _____

Introductory Paragraph - Thesis

Internal Paragraphs:

- “One reason or factor ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “Another reason or factor...” (back with details and explanations).
- “Perhaps the most important reason or factor...” (back with details and explanations).

Concluding Paragraph

Format B Question Type _____

Introductory Paragraph - Thesis

Internal Paragraphs:

- “First this key event or development took place ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “Then this occurred ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “Finally this happened, ...” (back with details and explanations).

Concluding Paragraph

Format C Question Type _____

Introductory Paragraph - Thesis

Internal Paragraphs:

- Similarities between two things ... (back with details and explanations).
- Differences between two things ... (back with details and explanations).

Concluding Paragraph

Format D Question Type _____

Introductory Paragraph - Thesis

Internal Paragraphs:

- “I disagree (or agree) because ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “On the other hand, it is true that ...” (back with details and explanations).

Concluding Paragraph