**Finalize Your Document Plan**

You're almost ready to write: you've got your thesis statement to guide you, you've completed your research, and the last step before you actually start writing is to finalize your document plan. Please return to your [preliminary document plan](https://libguides.royalroads.ca/grad_essay/plan) and add any new information that has emerged from your research and thinking that you've done since you originally created the plan. Make sure that you include sufficient detail in your plan so that you can easily track your line of thinking at any point in the document. One way of ensuring that your paper has good logic and flow is to plan your paper to the paragraph level. If you're new to academic paragraphing, please see [*Body Paragraphs*](https://libguides.royalroads.ca/developing_essay/bodyparas) for more information on the qualities expected of an academic paragraph; in particular, please watch the "Writing an Academic Paragraph" video.

When you're planning the structure of your essay, consider including key words in your plan to represent the topic sentence that usually presents the claim, evidence, citations, analysis, conclusion, and transition for every paragraph. You don't need to prewrite the entire paper; however, having key words in the plan will make sure that when it comes time for you to write that section, whether it's an hour or two weeks from the time you complete the plan, you'll still remember what you were thinking when you created the plan.

[*Creating a Document Plan*](http://media.royalroads.ca/media/Library/writingcentre/presentations/AW_plan/AW_plan.html), which is a section of the [*Introduction to Academic Writing*](https://libguides.royalroads.ca/typesacademicwriting) video, gives an example of a conceptual document plan; see below for an example of a more traditional linear layout.

**Introduction**

* Establishes the context of the discussion - why is the subject interesting/important? Why should the reader care about what you have to say on the subject?
* The thesis statement usually appears in the second-to-last sentence of the introduction. The last sentence of the introduction provides the transition to the next paragraph/section. See [*Thesis Statements*](https://libguides.royalroads.ca/developing_essay/focus#s-lg-box-16319948)for more information.
* For more information on writing introductions, please visit [*Introductory Paragraphs*](https://libguides.royalroads.ca/developing_essay/introparas).

**Paragraph A**

Topic sentence that presents the claim:

Evidence (as many as needed):

Citation (as many as needed):

Analysis (as many as needed):

Conclusion:

Transition:

**Paragraph B**

Topic sentence that presents the claim:

Evidence (as many as needed):

Citation (as many as needed):

Analysis (as many as needed):

Conclusion:

Transition:

**Paragraph C**

Topic sentence that presents the claim:

Evidence (as many as needed):

Citation (as many as needed):

Analysis (as many as needed):

Conclusion:

Transition:

\*Continue with as many body paragraphs as is necessary for the paper.

**Conclusion**

* Wraps up the paper and reminds the reader that the thesis statement has been proved through the logical analysis of the evidence provided.
* New information should not be introduced in the conclusion.
* Consider that the conclusion is your last opportunity to make an impression on your reader. What message do you want your reader to take away after reading your paper?
* See [*Concluding Paragraphs*](https://libguides.royalroads.ca/developing_essay/concludingparas) for more information.

**Final thoughts:**

Once you have the final draft of your plan done, the final step in this stage is show the plan to someone to get an opinion on whether or not the plan makes sense. If you want specific feedback on whether or not you're on track for achieving the outcomes for the assignment, check with your instructor to see if you can send the plan to him/her for review and feedback. You might also want to give the plan to someone who isn't knowledgeable on the topic and see if the plan makes sense to that individual. What you are looking for is anywhere that you've made assumptions of your reader's knowledge or understanding, and it's much easier to fix those errors at the planning stage than after you've written the paper. Keep in mind that your job as the author is to write a paper that provides all the information someone would need in order to understand your topic without having to do outside research. In other words, your paper should be a self-contained unit that anyone in the academic community could understand. Consider your audience to be someone in the general academic community, versus thinking exclusively of your professor whom you know is an expert in the subject. Accordingly, you will need to connect all lines of thinking, explain terms, develop arguments fully, and present a full picture so that your reader's attention stays focused on your message, rather than straying into "I wonder what that means?". Reviewing the plan allows you to check your plan to make sure that you've built in all those explanations and connections. For more information, see [*Who is Your Audience?*](https://libguides.royalroads.ca/developing_essay/audience)

Clear thinking usually results in clear writing. If you haven't thought through and planned your ideas so that you have a clear idea of your message, it isn't reasonable to expect that your reader will somehow understand your meaning. You need to be clear on exactly what it is you want to tell your reader; the document plan allows you to do that before you begin to write.