



Illinois Wesleyan's WC|TS Shares:
A Basic Analytical or Argumentative Essay Outline

The intro and conclusion are often the places students struggle with most. Keep in mind the introduction can be briefer, and to-the-point, in writer responsible culture.

For example:

I. Introduction

a. Background information

i. What do readers have to know to understand your analysis?

1. For example, if you're analyzing a given text, make sure to include author name(s), title of text, and a brief summary according to proper APA, ASA, or MLA format
2. For example, if you're arguing a position, make sure to clarify what that position is, who is involved, and the background details about other viewpoints/ opposing sides.

b. Ends with the Thesis:¹

Keep in mind the difference between analytical and argumentative essays can vary across disciplines. From a writing standpoint, argument means you are staking a claim and using evidence to support said claim. So, a thesis for an argument essay would explain the following:

i. Argument: What are you going to argue? How will you argue it?

1. EX: The Flint water crisis could have been less severe if the government listened to doctors sooner.

Analysis, on the other hand, involves studying an argument and the evidence used to support it to consider how effective or ineffective said claim is. A thesis for an analysis essay will explain the following:

¹ Always ask your professor for help. They may have different recommendations for introductory styles and conclusions. Office hours are a great time to bring forth your writing ideas and share with your professors what you struggle with as you compose.

ii. Analytical: What are you going to analyze? How will you analyze it?

1. EX: The argument that the Flint water crisis is one which will impact future generations for years to come must be examined so that we do not make the same mistakes again.

II. Making Body Paragraphs? Use the MEAL plan!²

a. M: Main Idea - topic sentence that relates back to the THESIS (not an evaluative claim, but one which focuses on the effect the text/audio/visual/ topic has on you).

i. EX: If the government had responded to Dr. Hanna-Attisha's emails, her faith in their responses would not have been shaken so much.

b. E: Evidence - details from the text: paraphrasing, summary, quotes, theory...

i. EX: At one point in her chapter "No Response," Hanna-Attisha writes, "These are responsible folks, I told myself. Why would anybody go into public health if they didn't care deeply about something this important?" (101). She is soon dismayed to discover, however, that she might be wrong. "Monday had come and gone," she writes, "Not a word" (Hanna-Attisha 102).

c. A: Analysis - So what? Why is the evidence important?: can include structural analysis, comparing and contrasting, focusing on what has come before, looking at criticism, drawing connections between the main idea and evidence, explanations that show comprehension, and a focus on the gap.

i. EX: In reading Hanna-Attisha's dismay and her growing impatience to hear from these "responsible folks," we see how her faith has been shaken. She is saddened to not receive a word from people she had previously trusted.

d. L: Link back to the main idea/ or link to the next idea (transition) - drawing back to the important, over-arching theme of paragraphs, or the main idea.

² There is a more-comprehensive MEAL plan handout on our website, under "[Student and Faculty Resources](#)."

- i. EX: This faith-shaking moment is important because it shows how the government officials in public health have started the shift from being Hanna-Attisha's trusted peers to her biggest opponents.

III. Conclusion

- a. What did your paper argue?
 - i. Restate the idea of your thesis to remind readers of your argument.
 - 1. EX: As shown, if the government had taken the advice of doctors, the water crisis in Flint, MI would not have reached epidemic proportions.
- b. Why is this material important?
 - i. EX: The lack of communication between doctors and the government lead to one of the most easily-preventable disasters of this century.
- c. What are the broader implications of this lesson?
 - i. EX: If we don't learn from Flint, MI, our town may be next.