

What should an essay look like?

Simple answer to that question - “ASK YOUR TUTOR”. She or he can give you criteria for how the essay should look. Make sure you know your tutor’s expectations and make an effort to meet them. There might be points in it! However, you may want some information on what elements you might include. Read on...

Cover page:

Typically, and in a standard Solent Uni format, your cover page will give the following information:

- Your name
- Your tutor’s name
- Your university
- Your department
- Your school
- Title of the module the essay is for
- Number of credits awarded to the essay
- Module/essay level
- The number of words in your paper

However, your tutor may have different requirements. Check before submitting your paper.

Contents page:

If your essays is more than 2,000 words long, and if it has further sections such as a list of illustrations or appendices, it may be a good idea to have a contents page. Put it between your cover page and the first page of your essay. Number your sections in the contents page (though not within the essay) and put in the correct page number (always give these a final check when you are editing).

First page:

Your first page should have your essay title (usually your essay question) at the top of the page. Put it in bold and make it a larger font. You should also go on to give the introduction to your essay on the first page.

Bibliography:

Essays at university are all about reading up on the people who know - gathering information from reliable sources - and then putting together your own thoughts, ideas and opinions based on these. **YOU HAVE TO READ** for your essay. And if you read, **YOU HAVE TO REFERENCE**.

Make sure you include a detailed bibliography of all the texts you refer to in your essay - but not every text you have read, only the ones you refer to - at the end of your paper. For how to reference correctly, go through the ‘How to succeed@referencing’ tutorial.

Illustrations/tables/graphs:

Anything that is not your original material must be given a reference. If you use a picture from another source - copy an illustration, photo, graph or table - then you must give a citation in the bibliography and a reference in the text where you use the picture - have a look at our example.

BUT, like quotations or other references, only use pictures in the text where they are relevant and add something to your argument. Make sure that the picture is referred to within the text of your essay. Remember to put a title on your picture as well - something descriptive that tells us exactly what it is.

Formatting and fonts:

- **Font**
The standard font for Southampton Solent university is *Trebuchet MS*.
- **Spacing**
Set your line spacing to 1.5 lines.
- **Indents or breaks**
It is fairly standard to leave a space of one line between paragraphs, rather than indenting the first line. A good way to do this is to set your spacing at 12pt after a line.
- **Section headings**
Opinion is split on whether academic essays should have section headings. For short essays it probably isn't necessary. For longer essays, it can be helpful. Check with your tutor whether s/he thinks headings are acceptable or not. If you are using headings, it is a good idea to put them in bold (but not underlined).
- **Title**
The title of your paper should be given at the top of the first page in bold, not underlined and in 14pt text.