

# Story, Argumentative Essays, Reports & You

BSC100 Building Blocks for  
Science Students

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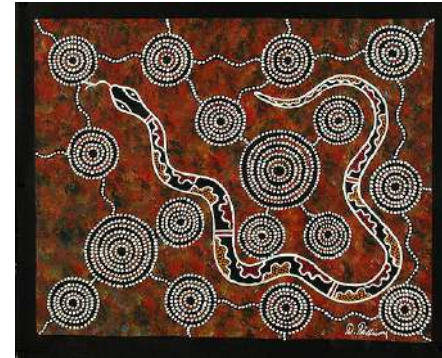
# Outline

- Stories – why?
- Argumentative essay structure + your voice
- Report structure + your voice

# Objective

- Road map to writing academically
- Finding your voice and your story
- Handy hints

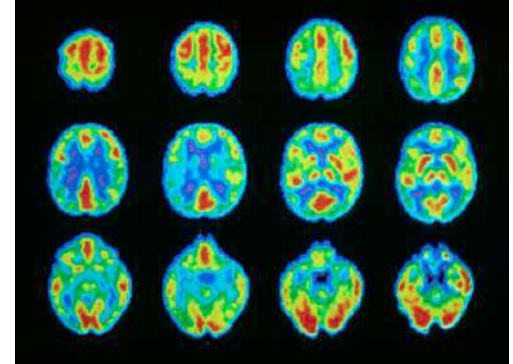
# Story



- Intrinsic to humans
- Oral traditions – written traditions
- Way to explain the world around us
- Example: Rainbow serpent – Dreamtime stories – in WA, Wagul associated with waterways

# Why stories?

Cognitive neuroscience:



✧ basic organising principle of memory

✧ make meaning of our experiences

✧ this may even involve making up events, people

# Different ways (genres) of telling stories



Oral, Written, Music, Images (Photos & Movies)



# Academic Genres

Within academic community – essays, scientific reports, reflective papers, review articles, etc.

Each genre has its own set of rules with regards to plot/content, sequence, language

**Essays ≠ Reports**

just as

Historical Romance novel ≠ Science fiction

# Academic writing - commonalities

- Formal language
- Third person, past tense, passive voice
- No abbreviations, no sms abbreviations
- No colloquial language
- Follows strictly set structure (story line)
- Supporting evidence



# Academic writing – particularities - Arguments

Every day life	At University
Irrational	Rational
Emotional	Logical
Uses put downs	Uses evidence
Negative connotations	Often positive connotations
Expressing feelings	Expresses a point of view
Rarely acknowledges other points of view	Acknowledges other points of view
Conflict	No conflict
Uncritical	Critical
Opinionated	Can be applied to any position

# Academic writing – particularities - Critical

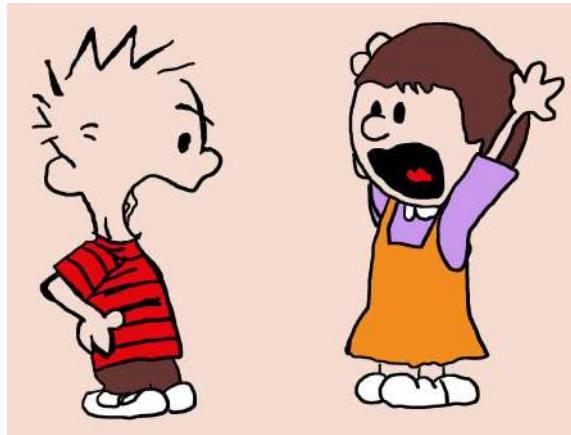
Every day life	At University
Put downs	Rational
Negative connotations	Logical
Suggestion that something is not good enough	Uses evidence
	Often positive connotations
	Expresses a point of view
	Acknowledges other points of view
	No conflict
	Critical
	Can be applied to any position

# Academic writing – particularities - Position

Opinion (in every day life)	Position at University
Does not require evidence	Requires evidence
Has only one side – yours!	Acknowledges other positions
Cannot be debated	Is debatable
Belongs to the individual	Is outside the individual
Is often personal	Is never personal
Uncritical (in uni terms)	Critical

# Argumentative Essay

## A step by step guide



# An essay at uni *is* an academic argument!

This means that you need to:

- Take a **position (Thesis statement)**
  - answer the essay question
- Make an **argument** to support your position
  - Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence
- Ensure that you are **critical** in your reasoning
  - so your argument is well-informed, well-considered, and strong

# How do I do this?

## 1. Start with a question...

Essay topic:

*Discuss the issues surrounding the live animal export trade in Australia.*

Break it down

- Discuss
- Live animal export trade
- Australian live animal export trade

Make sure that you know what it is asking of you

- Check your understanding with your tutor/peers
- Carefully read the additional information in your study guide

## 2. Research

*Discuss the issues surrounding the live animal export trade in Australia.*

### **Where do you look?**

- essential readings
- lectures

### **What do you look for?**

- Initially anything on live animal export

# 3. Answer the question

*‘Discuss the issues surrounding the live animal export trade in Australia.’*

- But what is the question? This essay tells me to ‘discuss’ something...
- End the discussion!
  - After considering the perspectives, **TAKE YOUR OWN POSITION**
  - You may need to brainstorm or write down all of your thoughts to help you figure this out
- This will become your **THESIS**

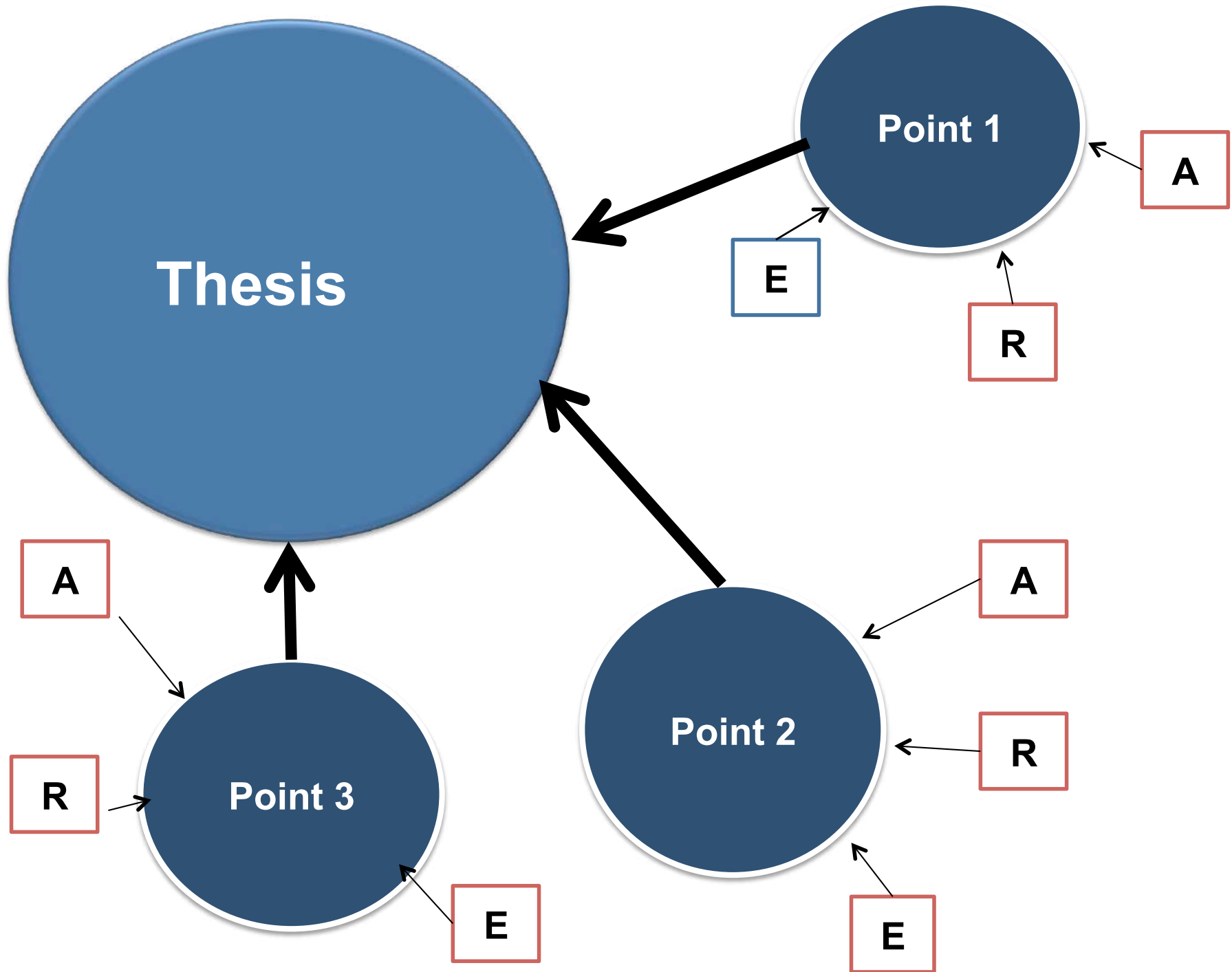


# 4. Compose a thesis statement

- Transform your answers to the questions into one sentence and you have a THESIS STATEMENT.
- Your thesis statement should be specific—it should cover only what you will discuss in your essay (e.g. live animal export should be banned).
- Once you have a thesis statement, you can build your argument.
- Remember for the answers you choose, you must be able to:
  - make an **A**ssertion
  - explain your **R**easoning for that assertion
  - provide **E**vidence from the course that your assertion is valid

# 5. Make a detailed plan: The A R E model

- Main reason
- Supporting reasons
  - **A**ssertion
    - topic sentence that makes a debatable claim
  - **R**easoning
    - explains you reason/s for the assertion in a logical way
  - **E**vidence
    - supports your reasoning to show that your assertion is well-considered and **based on research**



e.g. Live animal trade should be banned

# THESIS

**Because  
(Supporting Evidence)**

**However  
(Counter Point)**

It is inhumane and cruel

We cannot ensure treatment at other end

It is good for our economy

There is still a lot of support for it

because

because

because

because

eg.

Large % of animals die during transport

Smith, 2009  
Jones, 2011

Overcrowding on boats

The Australian, 2010  
Animal Liberation, 2000

We cannot control other countries

Arnold, 2010  
Bruce, 1999

Cultural differences

Craig, 2005  
Kemp et al., 2003

Indonesia

ABC News, 2011

X% of export \$\$

ABS, 2011

Creates X number of jobs

ABS, 2011

Politicians, agricultural sector

National Party, 2011  
Prince, 2010

# ARE in practice

One argument presented against the continuation of live animal trade is that it is an inhumane and cruel practice. Rather than killing animals at Australian slaughter houses, animals are subjected to week long journeys on boats, where they are kept in overcrowded conditions without adequate veterinary care. For many, the stresses of this journey result in their death. For example, records indicate that during 2010, 26,825 sheep died in 2010 during the journey to their final destination in South East Asia and the Middle East ([Animals Australia, 2017](#)). The most commonly documented causes of death of these animals was stress (e.g. changed diet 47%, heat stress, transport), injuries, (e.g. broken bones) and illness (e.g. respiratory illness, pinkeye) ([DAFF, 2012](#)). Without treatment, all of these would cause significant suffering in these animals.

## 6. Evaluate the quality of your supporting evidence (references)

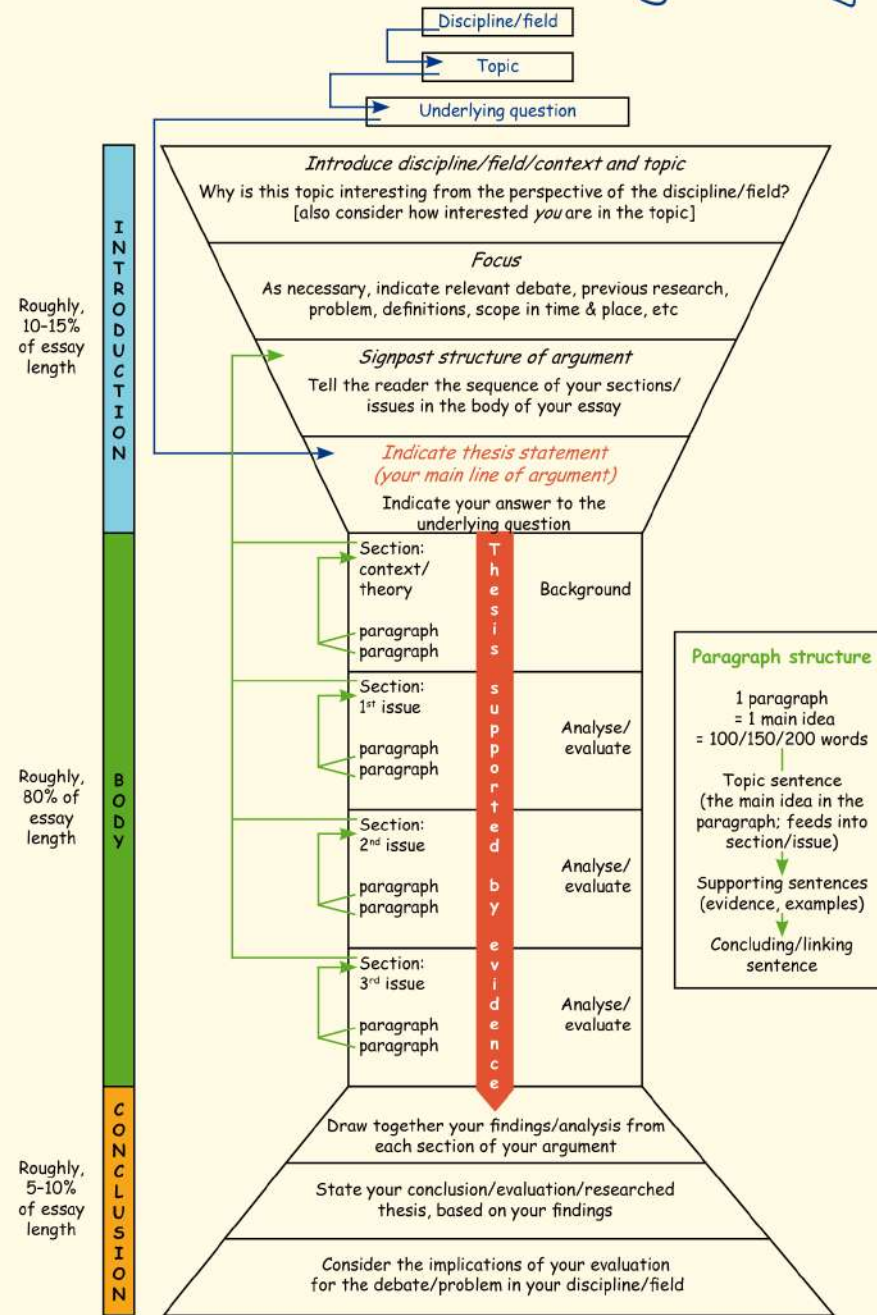
- Who is the author?
- Are they impartial? Which side of the issue are they?
- Where was this published? (Newspaper vs peer reviewed)
- How old is the data?

# 7. Write your first draft

- Try not to write and edit at the same time
- Get the ideas on the page
- It is better to write a messy draft of your **WHOLE** essay and allow the ideas to flow
- Think first, reason first; write well later

# Structure

How effective structure supports reasoned argument in essays<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Read the assessment task carefully because a topic or discipline often requires a different structure. And always remember the golden 'creativity rule' — all rules are meant to be broken, it's just that you first need to know them!

Taken from Rao et al., 2007, p. iii



# PART 1:

## Introduction

- Broad statement to set the 'scene'
- Restate the essay question
- **THESIS STATEMENT** (answer to the question)
- Summary of the main points that you will argue (in the order that you will argue them)

# PART 2:

## Body: Supporting Points

1. Assertion (point that supports thesis)
  1. Must be debatable
  2. Must take a position
  3. Must make a claim about something
  
2. Reasoning
  1. Explain how you come to your assertion
  2. Example to illustrate what you mean
  3. Hypothetical example to illustrate what you mean
  
3. Evidence
  1. An expert opinion (from lectures or readings)
  2. Statistics
  3. Research

# PART 3:

## Conclusion

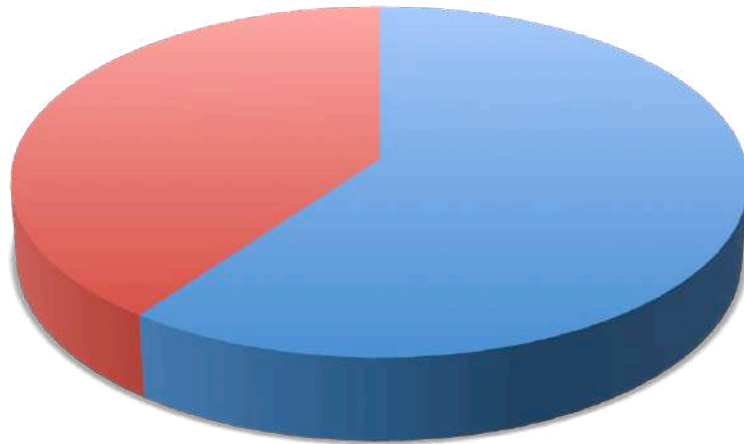
- Re-state the main points that you argued
- Explain how the main points worked together to support your overall thesis
- Re-state your thesis
- Broad statement linking your thesis back to the broader topic

# The essay writing process...

1. Start with a question
2. Research
3. Answer the question (end the discussion)
4. Compose a thesis statement
5. Make a detailed plan
6. Check your sources
7. Write a first draft
8. Edit, revise, review, research some more  
THEN, LET IT GO!!!!

# 7. Edit, revise, review, repeat...

Time spent



- **RED 33%**
  - Planning and writing up until the first draft
- **BLUE 66%**
  - Drafting, additional research, editing, proof reading, revising again
  - Try to spend more time editing than you do planning and writing!!

# The issue of your voice



- A cool reference to help you write essays:

Rao, V., Chanock, K., Krishnan, L. 2007. A visual guide to essay writing.

This book is available free as an ebook, on the internet.

Association for Academic Language & Learning (AALL):

<http://www.aall.org.au/>

Academic Skills & Learning Centre  
The Australian National University (ANU):

<http://academicskills.anu.edu.au>

Humanities Academic Skills Unit,  
La Trobe University:

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/>

supportunits/hasu

# Slide images

- Slide 4 & 6: Wade Crowella Williams. Rainbow serpent.  
<http://intermediaface.golgotha.com.au/webdesign/sites/dreamtime/pages/gallery/paintings/pic23.html>
- Slide 5: Brain scans  
<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/neuroscience-fiction>
- Slide 6: Snow White & Seven Dwarfs  
<http://kingofwallpapers.com/snow-white-and-the-seven-dwarfs.html>
- Slide 6: Bible, <http://globe-views.com/dreams/bible.html>
- Slide 6: Star Trek, <http://www.startrek.com/videos>
- Slide 12:  
<https://kateheddleston.com/blog/argument-cultures-and-unregulated-aggression>