

1. ACADEMIC ESSAYS AND THESIS PAPERS: FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

ACADEMIC ESSAY

An academic essay is the result of an attempt to present **an analysis** that focuses the writer's ideas and conveys them to the reader in a formal style. Within this broad definition, one can distinguish between several types of essays, and what students have to produce in terms of content, length or structure may vary significantly from course to course.

An academic paper should reflect its author's agreement, disagreement, or partial agreement with other contributors to research in the same field. The student should be able to demonstrate his/her ability to maintain, defend or modify a viewpoint when facing competing opinions in the sources. While preserving an independent stance throughout, an essay cannot be based on entirely subjective experiences, it **has to establish a dialogue with the primary and secondary sources** and should remain open to discussion.

THESIS PAPER

A thesis paper is a relatively long text which is supposed to demonstrate its **author's ability to represent a particular theoretical stance, conduct research, and maintain a dialogue with scholars** who have also articulated their views about the given topic.

A thesis paper must effectively communicate that its writer has a thorough knowledge of the given field. The thesis paper should reflect that its writer **has conducted research** in accordance with the conventions of a given scholarly field. This process always involves a systematic study of related, available, and preferably recent books and articles, and it may, if necessary, involve field work, testing, conducting interviews, or any other type of research.

THESIS STATEMENT

All essays and thesis papers should contain a thesis statement. A thesis statement is **the focus of one's paper**, a central idea that may take the form of one key statement, a few, closely interrelated and logically organized statements, or it may appear as a major question or a set of related questions that the text supports and elaborates.

The thesis statement should appear **in the introduction** and may point in a particular direction of **argumentation**. In this context, to "argue" means **to clarify and prove**: the author should illuminate various details through analysis with the objective of presenting evidence for the thesis statement. The individual arguments should be arranged in separate paragraphs, subchapters, or chapters (depending on the length of the academic paper).

Anything that is not pertinent to the central argument should be omitted.

SOURCES

An academic essay and thesis paper in literature, history or culture should contain **the analysis and discussion of at least one primary source** (the text[s] that the student discusses) and should consult **several secondary sources** to substantiate its arguments.

Primary sources should be separated from secondary sources in the bibliography at the end of an academic essay or thesis paper.

Note that an academic essay and thesis paper in linguistics will not always contain a primary source (or a primary source that is an actual text to be discussed).

SECONDARY SOURCES

An academic essay should reference **a minimum of three**, a BA thesis paper **a minimum of ten**, an MA thesis paper **a minimum of twenty academic sources** (i.e., scholarly books or articles from scholarly journals, or academic research databases).

Electronic (online or other) sources can appear among these sources, but they cannot constitute more than half of the total number of bibliographical items. Non-print sources (e.g. slide shows or videos) are to be included in addition to the minimum number of items.

Only clearly academic sources can be used. As far as electronic sources are concerned, irregularly maintained, non-academic, or outdated websites, articles with no authors or with non-academic authors (such as private persons or students) are not acceptable. Thus, texts from such websites as *sparknotes.com* or *wikipedia.org* cannot be cited or paraphrased unless your research focuses on these websites – in which case they are considered to be primary sources.

USING SOURCES

An academic essay is to be supported by references to various sources. You may either use a **direct quote** when you include the exact words of your source, or a **paraphrase** where you select and summarize your source.

Quoting:

- One should quote directly (word by word) if the essay performs **the analysis of a given text (primary source) to highlight the specifics of this given text**. All quoted texts are enclosed in quotation marks.
- Critical and theoretical texts (secondary sources) should be quoted directly only if they provide a definition, communicate a controversial issue, or are extremely well formulated and cannot be properly reworded. Otherwise, you should **paraphrase** or **summarise somebody else's ideas**.
- Do not quote facts and summaries of events.

Paraphrasing:

- In paraphrases, both the words and the sentence structure of the original text need to be changed. Be selective, summarize only the material you need to include to make a point in your paper.
- **Paraphrase if you can, quote only if you must.**

You must **add references** each time you quote, paraphrase, or summarize your source. By failing to do so you may risk being accused of **plagiarism**. The format of citing your sources depends on your discipline: papers in literature use the MLA style, history and culture papers use the Chicago style, while papers in the field of linguistics and applied linguistics follow the guidelines of the APA style.

Only use sources **if they are relevant to your argument**. Ask the following questions:

- Why is this source important for my argument?
- How does it relate to my ideas/argument?
- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the source? (Remember: you are encouraged to provide critical reflection on the sources, but make sure you explain and justify your position. In other words: why do you agree or disagree? To what extent do you think the author is right? How could the author's position/points be amended?)

STRUCTURE

All essays and thesis papers should be organized into **introduction, main body, and conclusion**. The main body of a thesis paper should contain chapters and subchapters.

The text should contain **paragraphs with topic sentences**. All sentences in each paragraph need to be related to the topic sentence, and, ultimately, to the thesis statement of the essay of the chapter of a thesis paper.

A paragraph usually consists of three or more sentences. Make sure the paragraphs are laid out separately on the page (e.g. do not hit the enter key to start your sentence in a new line if you do not intend to start a new paragraph. Make the first line of paragraphs clear by using a 1.25 cm (half an inch) indent on the left). **Do not indent the first paragraph of a chapter or subchapter**.

FORMAL ENGLISH STYLE

All essays are to be written in grammatically correct and stylistically appropriate formal English. If **ten or more severe language-related mistakes** appear in the text, the paper **automatically receives an F grade** (fail).

Make a **consistent use of either the British or the American** standard in spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. Use English language **spell check** in your Word.

Students should adhere to the following **academic writing conventions**:

- Avoid slang or emotive language.
- Avoid contractions (“~~can't~~” → “cannot”)
- Avoid vague and sweeping generalizations. (“~~People always say that...~~”)
- Spell out small numbers and whole numbers (“five years”, “two hundred people”).
- The first time the name of people, institutions or agencies are mentioned the full names should be used. In case of a complex institutional name, provide the acronym in parentheses after the full name, e.g., British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). For the

rest of the paper, you may use only the family name of the people or the acronym of the institution.

- Introduce people when you mention them for the first time. (e.g. “Louis Mountbatten, the Viceroy of India, ...”).
- The titles of books, novels, plays, journals, magazines and films are to be italicized, whereas the titles of short stories, poems and articles are to be enclosed in quotation marks.

FORMATTING AN ACADEMIC ESSAY

Unless specified otherwise by your instructor, an essay should be **semi-single spaced** throughout, and have the following **margins**: 3 cm (left), 2 cm (right), 2 cm (top and bottom). Type-facing is **Times New Roman**, the required font **size is 12**, and the standard space between fonts must not be manipulated.

The whole text needs to be **justified** on both sides.

Pages are to be numbered, and **page numbers** are to be placed in the right lower corner.

FORMATTING A THESIS PAPER

Thesis papers should adhere to the formatting guidelines set out in the “**Student Requirement System, Academic and Exam Regulation**” (Tanulmányi és Vizsgaszabályzat) of Károli Gáspár University. Check all the formatting requirements at: <https://btk.kre.hu/index.php/2015-10-20-12-12-54/tanulmanyi-osztaly/dolgozatok-szakedolgozat-szakedolgozati-portfolio-portfolio-zarodolgozat-formai-es-feltoltesi-neptunba-kovetelmenyei.html>

In addition to the guidelines specified in the above document, **you have to include a statement in English about academic honesty** after the similar statement in Hungarian. Download the text from the “Student Requirement System, Academic and Exam Regulation” *Annex No. 5* at:

https://english.kre.hu/images/doc/regulations/KRE_Academic_and_Exam_Regulation_20220228.pdf

Note that according to the university regulations, if a thesis does not meet the content and formal requirements prescribed by the University, then it should be rejected and marked ONE ('Fail/F/Elégtelen'). (TVSZ 77. § (18))

EVALUATION OF THESIS PAPERS

Thesis papers are evaluated based on a set list of requirements. See the **Thesis Evaluation Sheets** for BA, MA and the Teacher Training programs at <https://btk.kre.hu/index.php/2015-10-20-11-09-16/2015-10-20-11-15-36/anglisztika-intezet/szakedolgozat-portfolio-alapvizsga-komplex-vizsga-zarovizsga/category/1010-szakedolgozati-biralati-lapok-mintai.html>.

The best thesis papers are eligible for being considered for the **Institute Outstanding Thesis Award**. For further information see the website of the institute at <https://btk.kre.hu/index.php/2015-10-20-11-09-16/2015-10-20-11-15-36/anglisztika-intezet/institute-outstanding-thesis-award.html>