



Essay Structure

Essay Development

What is an essay?

The essay consists of one introduction paragraph, (three or more) body paragraphs, and one conclusion paragraph.

First Paragraph – Introduction

The introduction paragraph has several purposes:

- it gives the reader background information on the topic
- it gives a general idea as to what the paper will be about
- it is the first opportunity to get the reader hooked into the paper
- it contains the *thesis statement*



A *thesis statement* is one sentence (generally at the end of the introduction) which tells the reader what the entire paper is going to be about and will likely indicate what points are in the paper.

Body Paragraphs – Second, Third, Fourth, (and so on) Paragraphs

Body paragraphs are the meat of the paper. This is where the reader will gain most of the insight about the topic and where, if needed, research will be included. Each of the body paragraphs should support the ideas within the thesis statement. Each paragraph should contain similar elements:

- a *topic sentence* that begins each paragraph
- the information about one particular piece of the thesis statement
- description, examples, statistics, or other research-based support that develops the topic of the paragraph
- a *transition sentence* at the end



A *topic sentence* lets the reader know what the entire paragraph will be about.



A *transition sentence* sums up what the paragraph is about and leads the reader into the next paragraph.

transition words

however, although, clearly, then, whereas, therefore, admittedly

Last Paragraph – Conclusion

The final paragraph of the paper is the conclusion paragraph.

A good conclusion fulfills several purposes:

- it echoes the ideas from the thesis
- it is the final, lasting impression for the reader
- it gives a sense of closure and completeness to the essay as a whole
- it leaves the reader with something to take away or a bigger message overall



Tips for Writing the Essay

Maintain Focus

Each paragraph focuses on one main point from the thesis statement. You should always re-read paragraphs to ensure they are on topic consistently throughout the paper.

Reading papers aloud will help you hear if a section sounds off topic.

Keep Correct Point of View

Choose a point of view and keep it throughout the entire paper. Taking the writer's direct view out of the paper shows that the topic itself is most important. Third person is standard in academic writing.

| | What is it? | When to use it? | Singular | Plural |
|------------------------------|---|---|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1st Person | Refers to self | Journal entries, anecdotes, or other assignments that allow for personal view | I, Me | We, Mine, Our, Ours, Us |
| 2nd Person | Person/thing speaking to | Email and presentations | You, Your | You, Yours |
| Implied You | Avoid using the implied you – commands that do not use the word you but imply it (i.e., take out the trash) | | | |
| 3rd Person | Someone/thing separate from you | All forms of academic writing including essays | He, She, It | Him, His, Her, Hers, Its, They |

Use the Same Tense Throughout

It is important to use the same tense throughout the paper. It can be easy to flip from present to past tense while writing and never catch it. This is an easy and common mistake in writing because it only takes the use of one word or phrase to change the tense of an entire sentence or thought.

Present: He is working.
He tutors his cousin.

Past: He worked.
He tutored his cousin.