FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY OUTLINE

Writers who want their work to be clear and organized should follow consistent patterns in the way they structure their writing. The five-paragraph essay is a great place to develop and practice these patterns.

TIP: Academic paragraphs should range in length from 150-250 words. When gauging the length of your paragraphs, check your word count instead of relying on the number of sentences.

THE STRUCTURE OF INTRODUCTIONS

The Introduction — Accomplishes three main goals and moves from general to specific:

1). Grabs the reader’s attention in an appropriate way [i.e. a quotation, a brief illustration, an interesting fact]

2). Establishes the direction of the paper: Provides the context of the topic as it relates to the audience

3). Gets to the point: States the problem or key themes and concludes with the thesis statement*

THE STRUCTURE OF BODY PARAGRAPHS

1. **Topic sentence** — Begin with a sentence that introduces one of the points of your thesis statement.

2. **Assertion** — Transition to a specific point that supports the main idea of the paragraph.
   
   a. **Evidence** — Provide an example or cite research to support and explain your assertion.
   
   b. **Commentary** — Include several sentences that analyze your evidence and that clearly relate to the topic sentence. Repeat steps two through four up to three times within your paragraph.

3. **Concluding sentence** — End with a sentence that ties the paragraph’s topic directly back to the thesis statement.

The Conclusion – Reviews the main points of the paper and moves from specific to general:

1. Restates the thesis statement
   [the most specific sentence], not verbatim

2. Summarizes the main idea of each paragraph
   [about three sentences if writing a five-paragraph essay]

3. Calls the reader to act, respond, or conduct further research on the topic

SAMPLE OUTLINE

Broad hook/opening
Context /themes
THESIS

Paragraph 1

- Topic Sentence (references thesis)
- Assertion (claim)
- Evidence (logic/facts/research etc.)
- Commentary (connects evidence to claim)
- Concluding Sentence

Paragraph 2

- Topic Sentence (references thesis)
- Assertion (claim)
- Evidence (logic/facts/research etc.)
- Commentary (connects evidence to claim)
- Concluding Sentence

Paragraph 3

- Topic Sentence (references thesis)
- Assertion (claim)
- Evidence (logic/facts/research etc.)
- Commentary (connects evidence to claim)
- Concluding Sentence

Restate Thesis
Summarize main points
Call to action

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