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.

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.

*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 CONCLUSIONS

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

Paragraph 1
- Broad hook/opening
- Context/themes
- **THESIS**
  - 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