



The Five Paragraph Essay

Writing Strategies

By Brian Rascon

Writing in any language can be a daunting task. Not only do you have to conquer unique and difficult grammar structures, spelling, and vocabulary among many others, but you also must know how to best present your essay in a way that is coherent to the reader. This document will focus on strategies for structuring your paper in any language.

The five paragraph essay form is one that is employed commonly by a multitude of writers across the globe and one that follows a strict form. For this reason it can often be easily and universally employed as a standard by which to begin structuring an essay. The major parts of the five paragraph essay are outlined below:

Paragraph One—Introduction

The introductory paragraph of the essay is perhaps the most important one you will write. A few main points about the introductory paragraph:

1. Start Broad

When you start writing your paper, you need to interest your reader and make them want to read more. By beginning in more conceptual and abstract terms, you can let your reader know about the subject of your paper before you have even stated the specific topic, and

whet their appetite for more interesting and compelling analysis to come.

2. Hook

Once you have stated your essay's topic in broad terms, it is time to hook your reader and make them especially interested in reading your paper. Telling them why the subject is important, essential or provocative has the effect of making the reader not only see the value of your subject, but make them want to continue reading about it.

3. Thesis Statement

This is the *most important element of your entire paper*. Your thesis statement will not only state the reason for your essay, but it will also indicate to the reader your structure and the form you will follow in explaining and justifying your topic. By rule, thesis statements should be short and to the point. The best way to structure your thesis statement is to first state the main point or argument of your paper, and then provide brief reasons or areas of detail. Each brief reason represents a paragraph of your paper, thus outlining the structure of the essay without having to explicitly state it to the reader. For more information please see the separate document entitled 'Effective Thesis Statements'

Paragraphs Two, Three and Four—Body

The body paragraphs are where the majority of your data and/or justification will be presented. A few important points about body paragraphs:

1. Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph should begin with a strong topic sentence which outlines the main purpose of that paragraph. The topic sentence will reflect what was said in the thesis statement while also elaborating more on the points of justification to come. Effective topic sentences are another way to show the structure of your essay without explicitly stating it.

2. Justification and Data

Once you have presented your topic sentence, it is important to then justify with arguments or present pertinent data, depending on the purpose of your paper. Make sure that each item presented pertains directly to the topic sentence of the paragraph and does not stray too much. This will help keep your paper coherent and concise, which is the entire aim of an essay.

3. Use Transition and Signal Language

There are many words in English that can help you illustrate the form of your paper. For instance, using words like 'first', 'additionally' and 'finally' can help the reader to see which point you are making or expanding upon seamlessly and easily. Also, using conjunctions and contrasting language can help the reader to see what point you are making explicitly, and really drive your main message home. Study up on this language and know how to effectively



use it in context.

This form should be followed for each of the three body paragraphs, all with their own topic sentence, justification and helpful signal and transition language. You can also expand this form to include more body paragraphs for your topic if you like.

Paragraph Five—Conclusion

The final paragraph of your essay is the conclusion, which will help to close your essay. Main and important points about the concluding paragraph are:

1. Make Your Final Statement

It is important to finish your essay with an abstract conclusion or large scale idea. All of your previous paragraphs have set you up to make this conclusion, so be sure that the main idea of your essay is summarized here. This will leave the reader with a feeling of culmination upon arrival.

2. Reiterate Your Thesis Statement

Once you have stated the major conclusion of your paper, remind the reader of the thesis statement and three major points you depicted, which would be the main ideas of your body paragraphs. This should be a brief and varied version of your thesis statement to help drive the points home

3. Finish Broadly

Finally, it is helpful for the reader to have something that once again takes us back to a broad concept, just as we started. This will not only help to balance the essay, but also to leave the reader curious or wanting more information about the topic you presented. A great paper will not only engage a reader but also make them want to find you to seek out more information.