

How to Write a Five Paragraph Essay

an introduction

three main body paragraphs

a conclusion

We'll look at each type of paragraph, and at transitions, the glue that holds them together.

Introduction

The introduction should start with a general discussion of your subject and lead to a very specific statement of your main point, or thesis. Sometimes an essay begins with a "grabber," such as a challenging claim, or surprising story to catch a reader's attention. The thesis should tell in one (or at most two) sentence(s), what your overall point or argument is, and briefly, what your main body paragraphs will be about.

For example, in an essay about the importance of airbags in cars, the introduction might start with some information about car accidents and survival rates. It might also have a grabber about someone who survived a terrible accident because of an airbag. The thesis would briefly state the main reasons for recommending airbags, and each reason would be discussed in the main body of the essay.

Main Body Paragraphs (3)

Each main body paragraph will focus on a single idea, reason, or example that supports your thesis. Each paragraph will have a clear topic sentence (a mini thesis that states the main idea of the paragraph) and as much discussion or explanation as is necessary to explain the point. You should try to use details and specific examples to make your ideas clear and convincing.

Conclusion

Your conclusion begins with a restatement of your main point; but be sure to paraphrase, not just repeat your thesis sentence. Then you want to add

some sentences that emphasize the importance of the topic and the significance of your view. Think about what idea or feeling you want to leave your reader with. The conclusion is the reverse of the introduction in that it starts out very specific and becomes a bit more general as you finish.

Transitions

Transitions connect your paragraphs to one another, especially the main body ones. It's not effective to simply jump from one idea to the next; you need to use the end of one paragraph and/or the beginning of the next to show the relationship between the two ideas.

Between each paragraph and the one that follows, you need a transition. It can be built in to the topic sentence of the next paragraph, or it can be the concluding sentence of the first. It can even be a little of both. To express the relationship between the two paragraphs, think about words and phrases that compare and contrast.

Does the first paragraph tell us a pro and the second a con? ("on the other hand . . .")

Does the second paragraph tell us something of greater significance? ("more importantly . . .")

An earlier historical example? ("even before [topic of paragraph 1], [topic of paragraph 2]")

A different kind of consideration? (money versus time).

Think about your paragraph topics and brainstorm until you find the most relevant links between them. Click here to see more suggestions for transition words.

You'll also want some kind of transition from the last paragraph to your conclusion. One way is to sum up your third body paragraph with some reminders of your other paragraphs. You don't need to restate the topics fully (that comes in the conclusion) but you can refer to a detail, or example, or character as a way of pulling your ideas together and signalling that you are getting ready to conclude.

excerpt from <http://www.infoplease.com/homework/wsfiveparagraph.html>