

## How to Write a Five Paragraph Essay

Essays come in various forms, as do subjects, professors, writing styles, and graders. In order to make the best of a writing assignment, there are a few rules that can always be followed in order to find success. While you can never know exactly what a teacher will like, as long as you have proven a point, you will write a successful essay. The beauty of writing is that the power is in your hands. There is not always a "right" or "wrong" answer. You simply have to select an argument and back it up. If you do that, then your essay should be successful, regardless of whether or not it is liked.

The basic high school essay should be organized in the following five paragraph structure:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Body Paragraph One**
3. **Body Paragraph Two**
4. **Body Paragraph Three**
5. **Conclusion**

This list is a basic guideline by which to structure all your essays. Obviously, they can vary in length and in paragraph number. However, within the confines of this skeletal structure, is everything you will need in order to write a successful essay.

Let us go piece by piece through this basic structure to examine the elements of this style.

### 1. **Introduction**

The Introduction consists of an opening line. This opening line can be a generalization about life that pertains to your topic. It can also be a quotation. Another segway into the introduction is to start it with a little anecdote (or story). By "breaking the ice" so to speak with the reader, you are luring him or her into the rest of your essay, making it accessible and intriguing. Once you have "introduced" the Introductory paragraph with a generalization, quotation, or anecdote, you can write vaguely for a few sentences or simply jump into the crust of the argument. When you feel you are ready to introduce the specific focus of the essay, then you write the thesis statement. The thesis statement should generally come at the end of the Introductory Paragraph. If you are writing about a particular book, author, or event, you should name it (in entirety) in the thesis statement. You should also list your argument with its supporting evidence in this sentence. Essentially, the thesis statement is your tagline for the essay and the final sentence of the Introduction.

### 2. **Body Paragraph One**

The Body Paragraph One should open with a transitional sentence. It should lead the reader into the first piece of evidence you use to support your thesis statement, your argument. It is essentially a mini-thesis for the paragraph. From the transitional/opening sentence, you can go on to cite evidence to support your argument. This evidence must all revolve around a single theme and should come in the form of a quotation (or factual information from a primary source). If you put too many different themes into one body paragraph, then the essay becomes confusing. Body Paragraph One will deal with one theme for your argument. You may have several pieces of evidence to support this one theme, which is absolutely fine. Once you use a piece of evidence, be sure and write at least one or two sentences explaining why you use it. Then, wrap up the Body Paragraph with a mini-concluding sentence summing up only what you have discussed in that paragraph.

### 3. **Body Paragraph Two**

Body Paragraph Two should follow the exact same rules as Body Paragraph One. This time, pick the second theme in support of your thesis argument and cite evidence for it. Again, you must open this paragraph with a transitional sentence; one leading from the previous theme to the current theme.

### 4. **Body Paragraph Three**

Body Paragraph Three should follow the exact same rules as Body Paragraph One and Two. Again, you must open this paragraph with a transitional sentence; one leading from the previous theme to the current theme.

### 5. **Conclusion**

Your conclusion is a wrap-up of the entire essay. It takes your introduction and essentially says to the reader, "See, I told you so." You should be writing your conclusion with the belief that you have proven everything you have set out to prove in your essay. You are allowed to be confident here, and you are even allowed to drop little extra pieces of information that make the reader think more than you previewed in the entire paper. It is also important to have a concluding mini-thesis in this paragraph. This statement is the closing tag-line, the "see what I just did" idea in every paper. An essay can be immaculately written, organized, and researched; however, without a conclusion, the reader is left dumbfounded, frustrated, confused.

It is important to remember that this is a rough sketch by which to write your essays. If your topic is quite complicated, then you may have infinitely more evidentiary paragraphs than three. Furthermore, you can expand your individual themes, as well. You can write two or three paragraphs in support of "theme 1" (or Body Paragraph One). The most important thing to remember here is consistency. If you have two or three paragraphs in support of one piece of evidence, then you should have the same amount of paragraphs in support of all sequential facts.

Here is a diagram of the basic essay guidelines. Remember, "Body Paragraphs" simply stand for Specific Ideas for your thesis. There can be many more than simply three.

- **I. Introduction**
  1. Opening
    - Sentence
    - Anecdote Quotation
    - Generalization
  2. Explanation of opening, leading into Thesis Statement
  3. Thesis Statement
    - Name, Title, Event General argument
    - 3+ reasons why your argument is true (3+ pieces of evidence)
- **II. Body Paragraph**
  1. Opening Sentence (pertaining to Reason/Theme #1) Explanation
  2. Evidence A
  3. Explanation of evidence A
  4. Possible evidence B
  5. Explanation of possible evidence B
  6. Mini-conclusion only about Reason/Theme #1
- III. Body Paragraph 2**
  1. Transitional/ Opening Sentence (pertaining to Reason/Theme #2)
  2. Explanation
  3. Evidence C
  4. Explanation of evidence D
  5. Possible evidence E
  6. Explanation of possible evidence #F
  7. Mini-conclusion only about Reason/Theme #2
- IV. Body Paragraph 3**
  1. Transitional/Opening Sentence (pertaining to Reason/Theme #3)
  2. Explanation
  3. Evidence G
  4. Explanation of evidence H
  5. Possible evidence I
  6. Explanation of possible evidence I
  7. Mini-conclusion only about Reason/Theme #3
- V. Conclusion**
  1. Transitional sentence wrapping up paper
    - Return to original anecdote/quotation/generalization
  2. Reconfirm your argument, recounting how you have proven it
    - Write a mini-thesis, this time with more assertion
  3. Possibly throw out a new idea (related to your thesis)  
Optional