



The Five-Paragraph Essay

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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The first paragraph of a five-paragraph essay is the introductory paragraph or the introduction.
- B. Here the writer introduces the subject and **purpose** of the essay.
 - 1. This is accomplished by providing a clear thesis statement which states the subject and what the writer wants the reader to know about the subject. For a five-paragraph essay, **the thesis should contain at least three points about the subject** (see handout on **Writing the Thesis Statement**).
 - 2. Although the thesis is **usually the last sentence in the introduction**, it can be located anywhere within the first paragraph.
 - 3. In addition to the thesis statement, the introductory paragraph should provide some background information which leads to the thesis statement (see handout on **Writing the Introduction**).
- C. The introductory paragraph should gain the readers' attention and make them want to read further. Use amusing anecdotes, startling statistics, explicit examples, and other methods (see handout on **Writing the Introduction**).

II. BODY

- A. Paragraphs two, three, and four of a five-paragraph essay are the body paragraphs.
 - 1. Each paragraph should **focus on a specific point** about the topic, one of the three points in the thesis
 - 2. Each paragraph must have a **clear topic sentence** at the beginning.
 - 3. In addition, each paragraph should **use specific details** to help support the thesis statement and develop the topic sentence of the paragraph.
- B. The body should contain **only material that is relevant to the thesis statement**

III. CONCLUSION

- A. The fifth and final paragraph of the five-paragraph essay is the concluding paragraph or the conclusion.
 - 1. A good conclusion lets the reader know that all points in the thesis sentence have been developed.
 - 2. It sums up the essay and reminds the reader of the thesis statement, but it does not repeat the thesis (see handout on **Writing the Conclusion**).

- B. No new ideas should be introduced in the conclusion.
- C. The conclusion is very important because it is the last chance the writer has to get the point across.

IV. THINGS TO NOTE

- A. All essays should have **titles**.
 - 1. Titles should be short and concise and should indicate subject and tone of the essay.
 - 2. Titles should not simply be the topic.
 - 3. When writing an essay about another writer's work, never use the author's title as yours.
 - 4. The first letter of all major words within the title are capitalized. The first letter of articles and prepositions of three letters or less are not capitalized unless they are the first word in the title.
 - 5. Punctuation is generally not used in titles; however, exclamation marks and question marks should be used when needed. **(Try not to use complete sentences as titles.)**
- B. All essays must have a **thesis statement**.
 - 1. It must be **clearly stated** in the introduction.
 - 2. It should indicate the subject and point or points to be made about the subject, at least three for a five-paragraph essay.
- C. A good paragraph should be between **8 and 12 sentences**.
 - 1. All sentences must be related to the other sentences within the paragraph.
 - 2. Never have a one-sentence paragraph.
- D. Each body paragraph should contain **one main idea in the topic sentence** and should support the thesis statement by using specific details.
- E. There should be smooth **transition** between ideas and paragraphs.
- F. All information in the paragraph **must be relevant to the thesis statement**.
- G. The conclusion should let the reader know that the essay has ended and that the author has no more to say about the subject.