

The Five Paragraph Essay

The five paragraph essay format is a standard model for academic writing. It can be expanded from five paragraphs into 10, 20, 50 or more paragraphs, but the format remains the same. In other words, the length of the paper is not the important point. The important thing is that, like a story, an essay or research paper has a beginning, a middle, and an end and says something worth reading. In the five paragraph essay model, the format looks like this:

Introduction (or beginning)

This introduces the reader to the topic of the paper in an appealing, interesting way. In a five paragraph essay, this is your first paragraph. It begins with an attention grabber which may be a relevant quotation, a question, an interesting anecdote, a surprising statement on the topic, or anything relevant that will catch the reader's interest. The introduction also provides background information to help the reader understand the topic and/or the importance of the topic. The last sentence of the introductory paragraph is the thesis statement. This thesis sentence is the blueprint for the essay. It gives the reader the topic, the opinion or point to be made about the topic, and usually states the large points to be made in the paper.

Note that no where in the introduction is there support for the points to be made. The introduction is not the place to argue or prove the point; it sets up the issue or topic to be supported in the rest of the essay/paper.

Body (or middle)

The body provides supporting details to persuade or inform the reader about your topic. The first sentence in the paragraph is a *topic sentence* which introduces the first of the points mentioned in the introduction. The rest of the paragraph develops that point with details. These details can take the form of quotations, facts, statistics, expert testimony or any other specific information that makes the point. Whatever you use, make sure you explain how the information proves or explains your point. Many teachers require at least two or three supporting details with an explanation of each in every paragraph. Be sure to check with your teacher if you're not sure. The last part of the paragraph should be a clincher or transition sentence.

The next body paragraph takes the second point mentioned in the introduction and develops it with supporting details. It mirrors the first body paragraph but makes a different point about the topic.

The third body paragraph (4th paragraph of the essay) takes the last of the three points from the introduction and develops it with support. It makes a different point than the other two body paragraphs.

Conclusion (or end)

The purpose of the conclusion is to leave your reader with a clear understanding of the points made in the essay. This may be done with a short summary, a challenge or recommendation to the reader, or a prediction. Whatever you use, remember, this is the lasting impression you will have on your reader. The conclusion should be well thought out and interesting. It should never argue a point not developed in the body of the essay or stray into new areas unrelated to your topic.