

The Five Paragraph Essay

The five paragraph essay is a formula often taught in high school. In college, students are often asked to create complex arguments, and the five paragraph essay is often seen as formulaic or too simple.

However, the five paragraph essay can be appropriate for short essays (approximately two pages), and in-class essays for timed writing (when you are asked to quickly state a thesis and support it).

Introduction

Your introduction will prepare the reader for your essay. You should provide context for your topic, and then present your thesis statement in your introduction. The thesis statement commits you to a direction in your paper and will outline the points you make in the body.

- First, pre-write. You should have a thesis statement and part of an outline before you begin writing.
- Present your ideas in the introduction in the same order that they appear in the body.
- Generally, you should not include a fact that needs citation until the body of the paper.
- The thesis statement commits you to a direction in your paper and will outline the points you make in the body of your paper.
- The thesis statement is often the last sentence in the introductory paragraph.
- The introduction is often written after the rest of the paper. It is easier to write once you have written your argument.

Body

- Write three paragraphs for your three points or three pieces of evidence.
- Each paragraph should have a topic sentence that supports the thesis statement.
 - If you can't identify a topic sentence for each paragraph:
 - Rewrite your topic sentence to incorporate the idea of your paragraph.
 - Does it need to be more than one paragraph?
 - Change your paragraph or delete sentences that do not belong.
 - If your topic sentences don't support your thesis statement:
 - Rewrite your thesis statement to support the big idea of your paper.
 - Add a paragraph to better make your point.

Conclusion

Pause before you write the conclusion. Mentally review your main points and the big idea of your essay. A conclusion sums up the points you have already made. It will not introduce a new fact or include a fact that needs citation.

- **Sum up:** Briefly restate the main points of your essay.
- **Reaffirm:** Tell the audience why you are right.
- **Give the reader a take-away moment:** Tie your topic to something bigger that is outside the paper. This is your chance to explain to your audience, "This is important because..."