

Body Paragraphs: A Guide for Self-Editing

Structure of a Body Paragraph

-The body of your paper is the most important part. This is where your argument is developed and the real thought takes place.

-Each paragraph should cover one main idea, relevant to your thesis. Keep one idea to one paragraph.

-Most paragraphs should begin with a **topic sentence**, that directs the reader to what is to be discussed in this paragraph. The topic sentence will also keep you focused in your writing of that paragraph.

-Following the topic sentence should be the evidence and supporting details that are relevant and contribute to the topic sentence.

-The most important elements of a paragraph are unity, coherence, and development. Be sure that you have adequate evidence to back up you topic sentence. Be sure that every sentence in the paragraph connects to the topic sentence, and that each topic sentence connects to the thesis.

-Use transitions, vary sentence structure, and make each paragraph interesting and easy to read.

General Questions

___ Do your paragraphs generally contain 3-7 sentences?

___ Do all of your body paragraphs begin with a topic sentence (something to direct and inform the reader of what they are to read next)?

___ Are all of your body paragraphs relevant to your thesis?

___ Do all of the sentences in your paragraph relate to your topic sentence?

___ Do you use evidence, quotes, analysis, and support to back up your topic sentence?

___ Do you use transitions to create unity and flow in your paper?

___ Are your paragraphs ordered in a logical manner?

___ Do you analyze all evidence (quotes, data, research)?

___ Are your verb tenses consistent throughout your entire paper?

Transitions

___ Do you use transitions to make each separate paragraph connect and form a cohesive paper?

___ Do you use transitions to connect paragraphs, sections, and ideas within paragraphs?

___ Does the end of each paragraph connect in some way to the next paragraph?

___ Do you use transitional words such as:

*Accordingly, also, anyway, besides, certainly, consequently, furthermore, hence, incidentally,
instead, likewise, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, next, nonetheless, now, otherwise
similarly, still, then, thereafter, therefore, thus,
undoubtedly*

___ Is your paper easy to follow and are your ideas logically organized?

___ Do you avoid summary of what you have already written, as well as avoiding plot summary as a transitional tool?

When to Start a New Paragraph

-Do you start a new paragraph when you begin a new point or idea? Keep one idea to each paragraph. When you move onto another idea, begin a new paragraph. If you have an extended idea that spans multiple paragraphs, each new point within that idea should have its own paragraph.

-Do you start a new paragraph to contrast information or ideas? Separate paragraphs can serve to contrast sides in a debate, different points in an argument, or any other difference.

-Do you start a new paragraph when your readers need a pause? Breaks in paragraphs function as a short "break" for your readers—adding these in will help your writing more readable. Long blocks of text are more difficult to read.

-Do you start a new paragraph when you are ending your introduction or starting your conclusion? Your introductory and concluding material should always be in a new paragraph. Try to keep your introduction and conclusion relevant and concise.