

ELEMENTS OF AN ACADEMIC ESSAY

An academic essay consists of elements that are considered appropriate and necessary. While these elements may vary slightly, depending on the particular class or assignment, an essay does have a fundamental form: *the introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and the concluding paragraph.*

Introductory Paragraph

The introductory paragraph usually consists of three parts: an interesting or attention grabbing first statement, a bridge statement, and a thesis statement.

- The opening statement should engage the reader immediately. Some techniques include a broad and general statement relevant to the focus of the paper, an anecdote, a quotation, a statistic, an allusion, or a rhetorical question.
- The bridge statement makes a smooth, meaningful transition from the opening idea to the thesis. Here, the author begins to narrow the focus of his or her ideas. When writing about literature, the bridge statement is an opportune time to make the titles and authors known.
- The thesis statement clearly identifies the main point or points of the paper. Generally speaking, the thesis is the final sentence of the opening paragraph. It should be clear and leave no doubt as to the purpose of the essay; it should be stated in the order that the ideas appear in the essay.

Body Paragraphs

We think and speak in paragraph form; therefore, for the sake of clear communication, we ought to write in a similar manner. A good paragraph will have a topic sentence, followed by developing sentences, and ending with a clinching sentence. These will create coherence, unity, and elaboration of the paragraph.

- The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. Generally, it will be the first sentence.
- Developing sentences ought to be arranged in a logical order, usually by order of importance, time, or position.
- Link these sentences with transition word or phrases to create a smooth flow.
- Conclude the paragraph with a clincher sentence relates to the topic sentence and brings closure to the paragraph.

Concluding Paragraph

The concluding paragraph leaves the reader with a lasting impression of the focus of the paper. It should successfully highlight the thrust of the essay's main points.

- Many of the usual conventions of beginning a concluding paragraph, such as "in conclusion" or "in closing" have become worn and clichéd. Attempt a fresh approach to the first sentence of the concluding paragraph.
- Maintain the tone and voice established in the body of the essay.
- Avoid offering new information in the closing.
- Depending on the type of essay that is being concluded, consider one of these techniques: a call to action, a summation of key points, a dramatic example, a final quotation or metaphor, or a rhetorical question.