

Writing Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs support your thesis and organize your material. Therefore, it's important to logically organize the content of a body paragraph and the order of the paragraphs.

Four Parts of a Body Paragraph

Topic Sentence	Every body paragraph begins with a topic sentence. It relates the specific topic of your paragraph to your thesis and signals to your reader that you're beginning a new part of your argument.
Evidence	Evidence is any detail, fact, quote, or example that illustrates your claim. Different types of papers will require different evidence. For example, a scientific research paper will require facts, whereas a personal narrative will probably use details about an event. Choose evidence that is appropriate for your paper, represent it honestly, and introduce it with enough context.
Analysis	Your reader can't read your mind and immediately see why each piece of evidence is important to your argument. Even if you think it's obvious, analysis is necessary to show how your examples prove your thesis. A list of facts alone won't make a convincing argument.
Transitions	Transitions show both how the ideas within your body paragraph and different body paragraphs relate to each other. Integrating transitional devices (see Transitions handout) in between and throughout your paragraphs helps your reader understand your organization.

NOTE: Not all body paragraphs are created equal. Some might focus primarily on explaining a detailed piece of evidence, and the next might focus on analysis of that evidence. All paragraphs, though, should have a topic sentence and transition sentence.

Ordering Your Body Paragraphs

Aside from organizing the information within your body paragraphs, you also need to consider how your body paragraphs should be ordered in relation to each other. This will depend on the type of paper you write and what works best for the logic of your argument.

Some suggestions and tips:

- Outline different options before you start writing.
- Order of importance: put your strongest argument first.
- Chronological order: good for personal narratives and papers focused on timelines.
- Clump body paragraphs that are related to each other (makes transitions easier).
- Copy and paste in a separate document, or make a reverse outline to work with, to check how different orders affect the development of your argument.

Practice Writing Body Paragraphs

Example:

Thesis: Though it seems counter-intuitive, living with roommates is essential for students in becoming independent adults.

Sub-Point: Learning to communicate with different people

Topic Sentence	Because roommates come from different backgrounds than we do, sharing a room or an apartment teaches us to communicate with people who have different world views, which is a necessary skill for navigating the world independently.
Evidence	statistic on increasing diversity
Analysis	If this trend continues, then it will become even more important for young adults to learn how to communicate with people from different backgrounds; they will most likely end up working and living in diverse communities later on.
Transition	Even while attending college, students are finding that living with a roommate helps them build their communication skills.
Evidence	quote from a student
Analysis	Though it may seem more challenging at first, living with someone from a different background makes it easier in the long run to be independent because it improves problem solving and conflict management skills.
Transition	Though important, learning to communicate is just one way of living with a roommate helps prepare students for independent adulthood.

Your body paragraph:

Thesis: _____

Sub-Point: _____

Topic Sentence	
Evidence	
Analysis	
Transition	
Evidence	
Analysis	
Transition	