

Body Paragraph Structure and Development

Body paragraphs work to develop the essay's thesis statement. They contain the support needed to fully develop ideas and convince the reader that the thesis statement is reasonable.

Characteristics of Effective Body Paragraphs

- **Have a strong topic sentence**
The topic sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph and it states the paragraph's main idea. Every sentence in a particular paragraph should work to support the topic sentence of that paragraph. Each topic sentence should support the thesis statement of the essay.
- **Be coherent**
All the sentences in a paragraph need to flow smoothly and logically. Using key words can echo important terms and help carry concepts from one sentence to another. Pronouns and transitions are also useful. Transitions show chronological sequence as well as cause and effect.
- **Be well developed**
Paragraphs should contain support to bolster the main idea. Some common types of support are examples, quotations, statistics, details, facts, and personal experience. Be sure to explain how your support helps to strengthen your topic sentence.

Writing Claim Evidence Analysis Paragraphs

An effective approach to composing paragraphs is to use the claim-evidence-analysis formula. In this strategy, each paragraph begins with an assertion which is supported by evidence, which is in turn interpreted through analysis.

- **Claim**
The claim should appear in your topic sentence. It states the main argument of your paragraph and prepares the reader for what the paragraph will prove or explain. Often, the claim goes beyond a statement of mere fact to preview the interpretation of the evidence you will present later in the paragraph.
- **Evidence**
The evidence, which should be relevant and credible, should work to support your claim. Quotations, paraphrases, descriptions, examples, and statistics are common types of evidence.
- **Analysis**
The analysis is where you present your interpretation of the evidence. It should explain how the evidence supports the claim and show your perspective on the topic. Think of analysis as answering the question, "So what?" Why is that evidence interesting and important?

Example Body Paragraph

Thesis statement: *The benefits of attending a community college include quality instructors, financial savings, and career-oriented classes.*

Instructors at community colleges tend to be very dedicated to their work. At most four-year universities, the professors and instructors are focused on more than just teaching. They work in a “publish or perish atmosphere that puts emphasis on research” (Smith 12). While this is very important work, it can result in professors who are more concerned with their next publishing deadline than effectively teaching a class. However, at a community college, the instructors operate in a completely different atmosphere. Most of these instructors are dedicated to teaching and identify helping students as the most important aspect of their jobs. They are under no pressure to publish, which leaves them free to focus on their teaching career.

Notice in this body paragraph, there is a claim to start the paragraph. That is the topic sentence. Then there is evidence to support that claim. That is followed by the analysis, or the “So what?” The paragraph ends with a concluding sentence. Other positive aspects of this paragraph include repetition of key words (instructors), transitions (however), and the use of pronouns (they).

Things to Keep in Mind

There should be no “floating” evidence. The writer’s comments should surround and explain the support. Also, be sure to introduce quotations. Uses phrases such as “According to...” or “The author states...” or “She writes...”