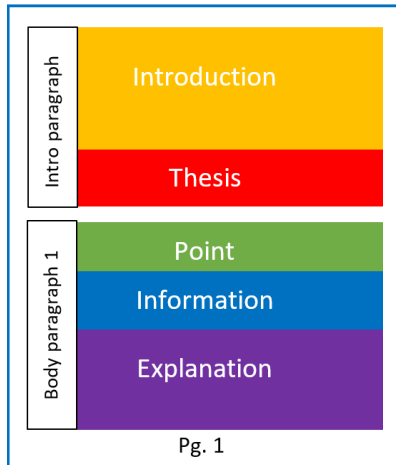


The Basic Shape of a Traditional Academic Essay

Essays come in many shapes and sizes, so read your assignment's instructions carefully for specific requirements. This handout illustrates and describes the components of a traditional academic essay.

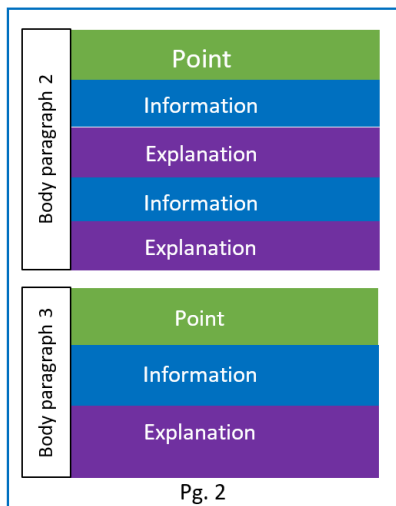


Introduction:

Here, you hook your reader, set the context for your discussion, and state your main argument. Common **hooks** include an interesting example or description, a thought-provoking question or quotation, or a contrasting idea, to which you oppose your argument.

Many writers present information in a broad-to-specific or known-to-unknown pattern, starting with something familiar to the reader and narrowing to the writer's argument.

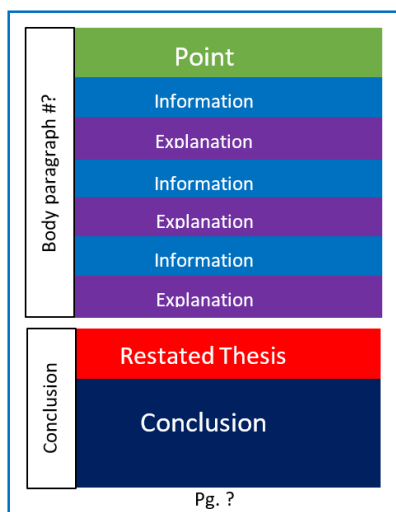
Traditionally, the introduction ends with your **thesis**—the clearest, most specific statement of your essay's argument. Each body paragraph should support your thesis, and the thesis *may* provide a roadmap of the main supporting **points**.



Body Paragraphs:

An essay usually has several body paragraphs that present evidence and explanations to support your thesis. Each body paragraph is made of three basic parts:

1. **A Point:** The first sentence of the paragraph (its topic sentence) expresses the **point** of the paragraph, which should directly and clearly support the **thesis**.
2. **Information:** Next, the paragraph should support that **point** by providing **information**, such as a quotation, an example, an anecdote, a statistic, or a fact. If this information is drawn from a source, you should cite it.
3. **Explanation:** Finally, the paragraph should **explain** how that **information** supports the paragraph's **point**.



As shown in the illustration to the left, the number of pieces of information that you use to support your paragraph's point may vary, but every time you include information, you should follow that information with explanation. As every essay is different, don't be afraid to add more body paragraphs as needed.

Conclusion:

Traditionally, the conclusion begins with a **restated thesis**. Think of it as a second chance to articulate your central argument, now that your reader has seen all of your reasoning. The conclusion's job is then to express how or why your argument matters, its **"So what?"**. Some questions to consider:

- How does your argument play out in our world?
- How does your argument matter in our lives?
- What should the reader do, now that they are convinced of your argument?

You may want to leave your reader with a final question to ponder.

To give an idea as to how a **body paragraph** might look, here's an example broken down into sections:

Body Paragraph Example:

Point (introduction to paragraph):

DNA methylation is a sensitive laboratory test that screens multiple diseases, thereby reducing the amount of unnecessary testing.

Information 1:

Early cancer stages come even without the presence of symptoms. Cancer registry data in Japan "indicate that early cancers are asymptomatic, and once symptoms appear, treatment may not be effective" (Nakabayashi et al., 2018, p. 999).

Explanation 1:

This poses a huge health risk. Asymptomatic cancers, or as we like to call them, "silent killers," show no symptoms, so people with cancer are unaware that they have it. DNA methylation prevents this from happening.

Information 2:

In fact, a few DNA methylation test kits for HPV called QIASure are available for purchase so blood screening can be done at home.

Explanation 2:

HPV, also known as Human Papilloma Virus, is the causative agent of cancers around the pelvic area such as anal cancer and cervical cancer. An experimental study by Sudhir et al. (2023) proved that the QIASure screening test eliminated the need for unnecessary colonoscopies and follow-ups (p. 3612). To be clear, DNA methylation tests do not replace diagnostic methods such as radiologic procedures and biopsies. However, test kits such as QIASure make screening accessible to patients who have painful procedures.

Concluding Sentence (restated point):

This solves one limitation of routine screening tests such as prostate exams and biopsies that patients may find rather disturbing or uncomfortable.

And now, putting it all together:

DNA methylation is a sensitive laboratory test that screens multiple diseases, thereby reducing the amount of unnecessary testing. Early cancer stages come even without the presence of symptoms. Cancer registry data in Japan "indicate that early cancers are asymptomatic, and once symptoms appear, treatment may not be effective" (Nakabayashi et al., 2018, p. 999). This poses a huge health risk. Asymptomatic cancers, or as we like to call them, "silent killers," show no symptoms, so people with cancer are unaware that they have it. DNA methylation prevents this from happening. This poses a huge health risk. In fact, a few DNA methylation test kits for HPV called QIASure are available for purchase so blood screening can be done at home. HPV, also known as Human Papilloma Virus, is the causative agent of cancers around the pelvic area such as anal cancer and cervical cancer. An experimental study by Sudhir et al. (2023) proved that the QIASure screening test eliminated the need for unnecessary colonoscopies and follow-ups (p. 3612). To be clear, DNA methylation tests do not replace diagnostic methods such as radiologic procedures and biopsies. However, test kits such as QIASure make screening accessible to patients who have painful procedures. This solves one limitation of routine screening tests such as prostate exams and biopsies that patients may find rather disturbing or uncomfortable.