

FIVE-PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATIONAL FORMAT

TITLE: Papers should have a title that is short and interesting. Try to avoid the obvious (e.g. *My Dog*), and try to think of something that will interest the reader or show some creativity.

PARAGRAPH 1 (introduction):

The first paragraph must have two parts: an introduction of usually three sentences and a one-sentence thesis, which follows logically from the introduction and leads into the body of the paper.

The INTRODUCTION should interest the reader in some way, perhaps by showing the importance of the topic or why it is timely. An introduction should NOT simply state the points of the thesis. For example, if your paper were about abortion, your introduction might discuss the recent Supreme Court cases which are challenging *Roe vs. Wade*. The material in the introduction does NOT get developed later in the paper. The body of the paper develops only the thesis, which is usually the last sentence of the introduction.

The THESIS has two parts: the main idea (opinion) and the three points which will be developed in the next three paragraphs to support and develop the main idea of the thesis.

Examples: *Abortion is justified* (opinion) *only in cases of incest, rape, or severe deformity* (three points).

Compassion, consistency, and patience (three points) *are the most important characteristics of good parenting* (main idea).

PARAGRAPHS 2, 3, 4 (body paragraphs):

The second, third, and fourth paragraphs of the paper develop the three points of the thesis in the same order they were mentioned in the thesis. The key to effective support and development is to go back and forth from general to specific. If "*Communication in a marriage is important,*" is one of your points, you need to follow that with specific examples.

PARAGRAPH 5 (conclusion):

The fifth paragraph is a conclusion paragraph. You may restate your main ideas, perhaps emphasizing the most important. Do NOT introduce new ideas in the conclusion.

TRANSITIONS

Use transitions to connect the paragraphs of development. Transitions can be words, phrases, or sentences. Avoid the obvious such as *first, second, third*. A good transition shows the relationship between two paragraphs. For example, “*The problem of alcoholism has led to many social and economic hardships for families.*” This transitional sentence would link a paragraph about the prevalence of alcoholism to the next paragraph about the problems caused by alcoholism. If one paragraph gives information that contradicts or challenges information in the previous paragraph, you might have a transition such as “*contrary to the belief that the death penalty is effective, many people believe... .*”

TOPIC SENTENCES:

Paragraphs two, three, and four need clear topic sentences. A topic sentence has two functions: it identifies the subject of the paragraph, and it limits the paragraph to that topic. If your topic sentence is about the cause of alcoholism and a paragraph mentions the effects of alcoholism, your paragraph will lack unity. The topic sentence usually comes first in a paragraph and it specifically refers to the point in the thesis that will be developed.