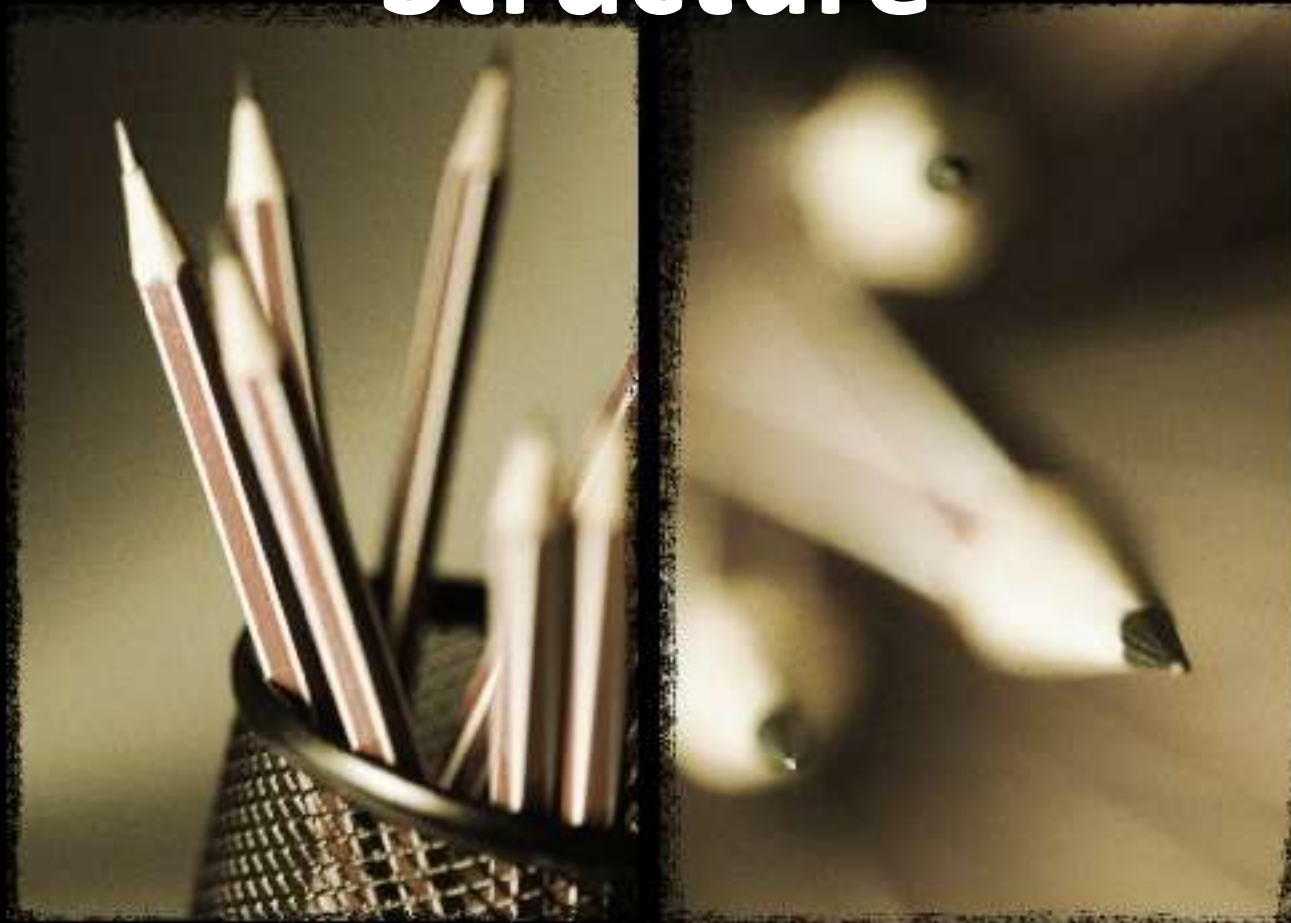


Essay & Paragraph Structure



PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

A paragraph is a group of sentences that work together to make a point.

- A good paragraph contains (a):
 - Topic Sentence
 - Support Sentences
 - Concluding Sentence

Topic Sentence

- States the main point
- First sentence of your paragraph

Topic + Controlling Idea=
Topic Sentence

Support Sentences

- Make up the body of the paragraph
- 8-10 support sentences
- Develop the main point by:
 - Using examples and illustrations
 - Citing data (facts, statistics, evidence, details, and others)
 - Using quotations and/or paraphrasing
 - Using an anecdote or story
 - Comparing and contrasting
 - Evaluating causes, reasons, & consequences
 - Offering a chronology

Concluding Sentence

- Summarizes/Restates the main idea
- Uses different language

Although most people believe that “April showers bring May flowers,” May often proves to be a far rainier month than April. For the past five years, the average East Coast rainfall in May has been 4.6 inches, as opposed to just 3.2 inches for April. When confronted with this statistic, some meteorologists argue that April was once rainier than April, before current ocean patterns shifted to increase May’s average rainfall. Others point out that, in some parts of the world, April remains rainier than May. Although no one doubts the fallacy of the ever-popular adage, the scientific community does not agree on the reason for the statement’s untruthfulness.

ELEMENTS OF A PARAGRAPH

Unity

- **Unity** refers to the idea that all of the ideas in a written piece are relevant and appropriate to the focus. Some considerations include:
 - each claim (assertion, topic sentence) supports the thesis (or topic sentence)
 - each piece of evidence is important and relevant to the focus of the paragraph or the piece of writing as a whole

Coherence

- **Coherence** refers to the organization and logic of a piece of writing; some considerations include:
 - precision and clarity in a thesis and supportive arguments
 - the arguments ordered in the most effective way for the writer's intent
 - the sentences and paragraphs "flow smoothly" for the reader; there should not be any abrupt leaps or gaps in the presentation of the ideas or story

Transitions

- Use transition words to connect sentences:
 - However
 - Furthermore
 - As a result
 - In fact
 - Yet
 - Finally
 - Meanwhile

ESSAY STRUCTURE

Essay Format

- I. Introduction** (ending in thesis statement) – three to five sentences
- II. Body paragraph 1** (format already given) – 12 to 15 sentences
- III. Body paragraph 2** (format already given) – 12 to 15 sentences
- IV. Conclusion** – three to five sentences

Function of an Introduction

- captures your audience's attention.
- gives background on your topic.
- develops interest in your topic.
- guides your reader to your thesis.

How do I write an Introduction?

- Write the introduction after you write the body of your essay.
- Write the introduction before you write the body of your essay.
- Rough out the introduction first and then focus and revise it once you have written your essay.

Writing an Introduction

- Envision your introduction as an upside down triangle. It begins broad and gets specific.
- Make a general statement about your topic.
- Write a sentence which explains the topic and begins to narrow your focus.
- End with a thesis statement that provides a clear idea of your topic and gives your attitude or opinion on the topic.



Broad opening statement

Explanatory
sentence(s) begins to
narrow the focus to a
specific topic

Thesis
statement

Broad Opening Statement

- An opening statement is often called a “hook,” and it should grab your reader’s attention. You can...
 - Make a general statement.
 - begin with a surprising fact.
 - ask a question.
 - use a quotation.
 - tell a story.
 - provide a definition.

Writing a Thesis Statement

- Placed at the end of your introduction
- Includes your specific topic + your opinion on the topic
- It may also include the reasons you will give to support your argument or develop your point.

Sample Introduction

- The common saying “A dog is man’s best friend” may have some truth to it, but dogs aren’t the only animal people enjoy owning (general statement about pets). In fact, nearly as many people own cats as own dogs (narrowed slightly to cat ownership). Dog lovers might argue that canines make better pets, but they are mistaken (further narrowed). Fabulous felines make better companions than mangy mutts because they are both smarter and easier to care for (thesis with topic, opinion, and reasons).

Body Paragraphs

Topic sentence which indicates first point - Cats are smarter than dogs.

A. Supporting idea 1

1. Detail

2. Detail

B. Supporting idea 2

1. Detail

2. Detail

C. Supporting idea 3

1. Detail

2. Detail

D. Concluding sentence

III. Repeat of first body paragraph using second point – Cats are easier to care for than dogs.

Conclusion

- Emphasizes the *purpose* and *importance* of your essay
- Explains the *significance* or *consequences* of your findings
- Indicates the wider applications of the *method* developed in your essay
- Establishes your essay as the *basis* for further investigation
- Shows *other directions of inquiry* into the subject

Organizing a Conclusion

- Transition from last body paragraph
- Sentences explaining how paper has fit together and leads to a stronger, more emphatic and more detailed version of your thesis
- Discussion of implications for further research
 - Other areas that can use the same method
 - How your finds change the readers' understanding of the topic
 - Discussion of areas in need of more detailed investigation
- Final words
- Why the essay was important or interesting
- Any other areas in which your essay has significance: ethics, practical applications, politics

Sample Conclusion

- As one can clearly see, cats are far superior to dogs as house pets. They're smart enough and independent enough to take care of themselves, and they won't make a mess of your home because caring for a cat is simple (restatement of thesis and main ideas). If everyone could only understand just how great cats are, there wouldn't be a single household without at least one feline for a pet (idea that speaks to a larger issue).