

Organization

Thesis, Introduction, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusion

After considering your topic, you should be eager to convey your information to your audience. However, before you begin drafting, you should carefully plan how to convey this information. Mapping and other planning activities are highly recommended. As you finish your first draft, consider revising, if necessary, your **thesis**, your **introductory paragraph**, your **body paragraphs**, and your **conclusion**. Such revision will help you be a more effective communicator.

Thesis

Your **thesis**, which is usually located in your introductory paragraph, is a statement that reflects the main idea or focus of your paper.

As you write, you may revise your thesis considerably. A thesis, even one subject to change, allows you to maintain your focus. Ultimately, a thesis will allow your reader to immediately understand your purpose in writing.

Introduction

Do not be surprised if you have to struggle with the introduction to your paper. An **introductory paragraph** will enhance your thesis statement by providing additional focus, attracting your reader's attention, and asserting the tone and purpose of your paper. In Patrick Sebranek, Verne Meyer, and Dave Kempers' *Writer's Inc.*, they suggest the following starting points for creating an introductory paragraph:

- Begin with a funny story to set a humorous tone.
- Challenge your readers with a thought-provoking question.
- Open with an impressive or fitting quotation.
- Offer a little "sip" of the conclusion to get your reader's attention.
- List all your main points and treat your subject in a very serious, straightforward manner.
- Provide a dramatic, eye-opening statement.
- Come up with an angle that none of your readers have seen before.

TIP: Being flexible about when you write your introductory paragraph can be very helpful. Some writers prefer to write it as the very last thing. Others cannot write a paper until they have defined its direction through an introduction. Try working in different patterns to figure out what works best for you.

Body Paragraphs

The **topic sentence** of each body paragraph sets up what will be discussed in that paragraph. While it is usually located at the beginning of a body paragraph, the topic sentence may also be located elsewhere within the paragraph. When it occurs at the end of a body paragraph, it summarizes rather than introduces the content of the paragraph.

The sentences within the body paragraph may be organized using a variety of organizational schemes. The scheme or schemes that you select enhance your ability to convey your information. You may choose to:

Narrate- tell a story

Describe- provide a detailed image

Define- clarify what is meant by a term or group of terms

Explain- make it clear what is under discussion and why

Analyze- examine in order to identify the causes, key factors, results, etc

Classify- gather similar items into cohesive categories

Compare- look at the similarities and differences of two items or ideas

Argue- attempt to convince your reader of your point of view

Your choice reflects what you decide is the best way to convey your information. There is obviously room for overlapping of methods. When a paragraph is logically organized, you are said to have achieved **coherence**. A coherent paragraph makes sense to both the writer and the reader.

TIP: Having someone unfamiliar with your project read your draft is very important because that person can tell you if something is coherent or not.

Transitions are very important when thinking about coherence and unity. There are different kinds of transitions that indicate different moves within a paper. It is important to use the type of transition that is most appropriate for the movement in your thinking. The following is a list of **some** transitions and the movement they indicate.

To Signal Sequence or Addition

again also besides furthermore

To Signal Time

afterward as soon as at first before at the same time
finally later meanwhile next now
subsequently then until soon earlier

To Signal Comparison

also similarly likewise

To Signal Contrast

although but despite even though however instead
meanwhile nevertheless nonetheless still whereas yet

To Signal Conclusions or Summaries

as a result consequently therefore thus

To Signal Concession

admittedly certainly granted naturally

To Signal Causes or Effects

accordingly as a result because hence
so then since consequently

Additionally, your body paragraph sentences should have **unity**. According to Penelope Choy and Dorothy Goldbart Clark in their text *Basic Grammar and Usage*, “everything in your paragraph exists to describe, illustrate, prove, or discuss one point – your topic sentence.”

Conclusion

As its name implies, your **concluding paragraph** is designed to give your reader and yourself a sense of completion. According to Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell in *The Brief Holt Handbook*, conclusions may offer:

- a prediction**- what may happen in the future of the issue you are discussing
- a recommendation**- what you would like the reader to do with the information presented
- a forceful opinion**- what you strongly believe about the topic
- a pertinent quotation**- what someone else has said about your topic that makes sense in the context of what you are saying

Additionally, many writers prefer to rephrase their original thesis statement and summarize the main points of the composition. However, Kirszner and Mandell suggest avoiding:

- introducing** new points or new directions
- repeating** previously stated information
- apologizing**
- casting doubt** on your previous assertions

Your concluding paragraph may be as difficult to write as your introductory paragraph. Like the introductory paragraph, you may want to attempt writing this at different points during your writing process in order to figure out what works best for you.