

Strong Body Paragraphs

A strong body paragraph explains, proves, and/or supports your paper's argumentative claim or thesis statement. If you're not sure how to craft one, try using this handy guide!

1. **INSERT A TOPIC SENTENCE:**

Encapsulates and organizes an entire paragraph. Although topic sentences may appear anywhere in a paragraph, in academic essays they often appear at the beginning. When creating a topic sentence, ask yourself what's going on in your paragraph. Why you chosen to include the information you have? Why is the paragraph important in the context of your argument or thesis statement? What point are you trying to make?

It should be noted that relating your topic sentences to your thesis can help strengthen the coherence of your essay. If you include an argumentative claim or thesis statement in your introduction, then think of incorporating a keyword from that statement into the topic sentence. But you need not be overly explicit when you echo the thesis statement. Better to be subtle rather than heavy-handed. Do not forget that your topic sentence should do more than just establish a connection between your paragraph and your thesis. Use a topic sentence to show how your paragraph contributes to the *development* of your argument by moving it that one extra step forward. If your topic sentence merely restates your thesis, then either your paragraph is redundant or your topic sentence needs to be reformulated. If *several* of your topic sentences restate your thesis, even if they do so in different words, then your essay is probably repetitive.

Although most paragraphs should have a topic sentence, there are a few situations when a paragraph might not need a topic sentence. For example, you might be able to omit a topic sentence in a paragraph that narrates a series of events, if a paragraph continues developing an idea that you introduced (with a topic sentence) in the previous paragraph, or if all the sentences and details in a paragraph clearly refer—perhaps indirectly—to a main point. The vast majority of your paragraphs, however, should have a topic sentence.

2. **EXPLAIN YOUR TOPIC SENTENCE:**

Does your topic sentence require further explanation? If so, add another 1-2 sentences explaining your topic sentence here.

3. **INTRODUCE YOUR EVIDENCE:**

Most academic papers require students to integrate evidence (often quotes, but it can also include statistics, figures, common sense examples, etc.) to support the claim(s) made in the paragraph and/or the paper as a whole. When including evidence, make sure it is integrated smoothly into the text of the paper. Readers should be able to move from your words to your evidence without feeling a logical or mechanical jolt.

When introducing quotes, always a) identify the source and b) summarize to provide context. Many terms may be used to introduce quoted material: *asserts*, *believes*, *claims*, *comments*, *confirms*, *declares*, *defines*, *describes*, *explains*, *indicates*, *makes clear*, *proposes*, etc. However, these terms are not interchangeable. Make your choice based on your meaning.

Example #1: All of us know the grammar of our own language because, as Robert C. Pooley writes, "grammar is the structure: the observation of what people do when they use English words in discourse" (95).