

Build the Best Body Paragraphs

A. What Makes a Body Paragraph Effective?

1. Every Body Paragraph Should **Support Your Thesis Statement**, and Every Body Paragraph Should Have a **Topic Sentence**.

- Just like your Thesis Statement is a roadmap for your essay, you can think of the **Topic Sentence as a roadmap for the paragraph**. A topic sentence must be general enough to express the paragraph's overall subject, but it should be specific enough that the reader can understand the paragraph's main point.

- **Activity: Topic Sentence Exercises**

Write a topic sentence for each of the following paragraphs:

For example, the Eskimos, living in a treeless region of snow and ice, sometimes build temporary homes out of thick blocks of ice. People who live in deserts, on the other hand, use the most available material, mud or clay, which provides good insulation from the heat. In Northern Europe, Russia, and other areas of the world where forests are plentiful, people usually construct their homes out of wood. In the islands of the South Pacific, where there is a plentiful supply of bamboo and palm, people use these tough, fibrous plants to build their home. (*Writing Academic English*)

During the 1990s, I really enjoyed watching *Friends* on television every Thursday night. I really wanted Rachel's haircut—I think every girl wanted Rachel's haircut back then! Rachel's haircut went really well with the Guess Jeans that were so popular in the 1990s. I remember all the advertisements for Guess and Calvin Klein Jeans that were in each month's *Sassy* magazine. I don't think *Sassy* magazine exists anymore, but it was one of the most popular magazines for young women in the 1990s. (*The Purdue OWL*)

In his fifteen seasons, Jordan was elected to 14 All-Star teams and 10 first-team All-NBA squads. Not only did he lead his teams to six NBA championships, he also won the scoring title ten times! He was the Most Valuable Player in the NBA five times, a remarkable feat. Jordan electrified the crowds with his amazing moves and dunks, and he won the Slam Dunk Contest twice. His incredible stats cement his status; plus he has transcended the typical fame an athlete enjoys.

2. Paragraph Content and Organization

- **THE THREE E's:** Evidence, Examples, Explanation

Your Topic Sentence identifies the main idea of your paragraph, but then you must support that idea. **Use the Three E's** to ensure the effectiveness of your body paragraphs:

- Evidence = facts, details, statistics, quotes ...
 - Examples = real-life and/or hypothetical (typical)
 - Explanation = No matter how compelling your evidence is, it still needs to be explained. **Why** is this evidence important? **How** does this evidence prove the point you are trying to make in this paragraph and/or your paper as a whole? Answering these questions (in at least 2-3 sentences) will strengthen your paragraph and your overall argument.
- **Remember:** Evidence should not simply be inserted willy-nilly into your body paragraphs. In order to flow smoothly, evidence should be:
(1) Introduced, (2) Inserted, and (3) Explained. Think of it like a sandwich with your evidence as the meat!

3. Insert a Concluding Sentence. Write a sentence that wraps up the paragraph. Reassert how your paragraph contributes to the development of your argument as a whole. In other words, **tie your evidence back to your thesis.**

- **Activity:** *Rearrange the following sentences to form an organized body paragraph. Next, compose a concluding sentence to wrap up the paragraph.*
1. Next, add antifreeze to your windshield washer fluid; otherwise, the fluid will freeze and possibly break the container.
 2. First, put on snow tires if you plan to drive on snowy, icy roads very often.
 3. Driving in winter, especially on snowy, icy roads, can be less troublesome if you take a few simple precautions.
 4. Finally, it is also a good idea to carry tire chains, a can of spray to unfreeze door locks, and a windshield scraper in your car when driving in winter weather.

5. Second, check the amount of antifreeze in your radiator and add more if necessary.

Topic sentence - this sentence shows your readers what the paragraph will be about

Introduce evidence

Evidence/examples

Explain everything your reader needs to know about your evidence. Give specific names and examples.

Discussion - Discuss how the evidence is important and how it proves your argument (connect back to your thesis statement). **This is the most important part!**

