

THE FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY

A classic format for compositions is the five-paragraph essay. It is not the only format for writing an essay, of course, but it is the model used for assessment on the ACCUPLACER placement test. Below you will find some useful tips on the structure of the five-paragraph essay and a sample essay.

Structure

Introduction:

Introductory Paragraph

The introductory paragraph is the first paragraph of your essay. It introduces the main idea of your essay. A good opening paragraph captures the interest of your reader and tells why your topic is important. The introductory paragraph needs to include a thesis statement. The thesis statement is the main idea of the essay stated in a single sentence. You must limit your entire essay to the topic you have introduced in your thesis statement. The introductory paragraph should also provide some background information about your topic. You can use interesting facts, quotations, or definitions of important terms you will use later in the essay. The last sentence of this paragraph must also contain a transitional “hook” which moves the reader to the first paragraph of the body of the paper.

Example:

Hockey has been a part of life in Canada for over 120 years. It has evolved into an extremely popular sport watched and played by millions of Canadians. **The game has gone through several changes since hockey was first played in Canada.** (thesis statement)

Body:

Supporting paragraphs make up the main body of your essay. They also develop the main idea. The supporting paragraphs list the points that develop the main idea of your essay. You should place each supporting point in its own paragraph, and develop each supporting point with facts, details, and examples. To connect your supporting paragraphs, you should use special transition words. Transition words link your paragraphs together and make your essay easier to read. Use them at the beginning and end of your paragraphs. Like all good paragraphs, each supporting paragraph should have a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a summary sentence. The following are examples of transition words that can help you to link your paragraphs together:

For listing different points:	For counter examples:
First Second Third	However Even though On the other hand Nevertheless
For additional ideas:	To show cause and effect
Another In addition to Related to Furthermore Also	Therefore Thus As a result of Consequently

Body – First Paragraph

The first paragraph of the body should contain the strongest argument, most significant example, cleverest illustration, or an obvious beginning point. The first sentence of this paragraph should include the “reverse hook” which ties in with the transitional hook at the end of the introductory paragraph. The topic for this paragraph should be in the first or second sentence. This topic should relate to the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. The last sentence in this paragraph should include a transitional hook to tie into the second paragraph of the body.

Body – Second Paragraph

The second paragraph of the body should contain the second strongest argument, second most significant example, second cleverest illustration, or an obvious follow up to the first paragraph in the body. The first sentence of this paragraph should include the reverse hook which ties in with the transitional hook at the end of the first paragraph of the body. The topic for this paragraph should be in the first or second sentence. This topic should relate to the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. The last sentence in this paragraph should include a transitional hook to tie into the third paragraph of the body.

Body – Third Paragraph

The third paragraph of the body should contain the weakest argument, weakest example, weakest illustration, or an obvious follow up to the second paragraph in the body. The first sentence of this paragraph should include the reverse hook which ties in with the transitional hook at the end of the second paragraph. The topic for this paragraph should be in the first or second sentence. This topic should relate to the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. The last sentence in this paragraph should include a transitional, concluding hook that signals the reader that this is the final, major point being made in the paper. This hook also leads into the last or concluding paragraph.

Conclusion:

Concluding Paragraph

The summary paragraph comes at the end of your essay, after you have finished developing your ideas. It summarizes or restates the main idea of the essay. You want to leave the reader with a sense that your essay is complete. This paragraph should include the following:

1. an allusion to the pattern used in the introductory paragraph.
2. a restatement of the thesis statement, using some of the original language or language
3. that “echoes” the original language. (The restatement, however, must not be a duplicate of your thesis statement.)
4. a summary of the three main points from the body of the paper.
5. a final statement that gives the reader signals that the discussion has come to an end.

Example:

Overall, the changes that occurred in hockey have helped to improve the game. Hockey is faster and more exciting as a result of changes in the past 120 years. For these reasons, modern hockey is a better game than hockey in the 1890s.

Five Paragraph Essay Sample

The Hazards of Moviegoing

By John Langon – From College Writing Skills with Reading

<p>I am a movie fanatic. When friends want to know what picture won the Oscar in 1980 or who played the police chief in Jaws, they ask me. My friends, though, have stopped asking me if I want to go out to the movies. The problems in getting to the theater, the theater itself, and the behavior of some patrons are all reasons why I often wait for a movie to show up on TV.</p>	<p>Introductory paragraph ← (Thesis statement)</p>
<p>First of all, just getting to the theater presents difficulties. Leaving a home equipped with a TV and a video recorder isn't an attractive idea on a humid, cold, or rainy night. Even if the weather cooperates, there is still a thirty minute drive to the theater down a congested highway, followed by the hassle of looking for a parking space. And then there are the lines. After hooking yourself to the end of a human chain, you worry about whether there will be enough tickets, whether you will get seats together, and whether many people will sneak into the line ahead of you.</p>	<p>First supporting paragraph</p>
<p>Once you have made it to the box office and gotten your tickets, you are confronted with the problems of the theater itself. If you are in one of the run-down, older theaters, you must adjust to the musty smell of seldom-cleaned carpets. Escaped springs lurk in the faded plush or cracked leather seats, and half the seats you sit in seem loose or tilted so that you sit at a strange angle. The newer, twin and quad theaters offer their own problems. Sitting in an area only one-quarter the size of a regular theater, moviegoers often have to put up with the sound of the movie next door. This is especially jarring when the other movie involves racing cars or a karate war, and you are trying to enjoy a quiet love story. And whether the theater is old or new, it will have floors that seem to be coated with rubber cement. By the end of a movie, shoes almost have to be pried off the floor because they have become sealed to a deadly compound of spilled soda, hardening bubble gum, and crushed Ju-Jubes.</p>	<p>Second supporting paragraph</p>
<p>Some of the patrons are even more of a problem than the theater itself. Little kids race up and down the aisles, usually in giggling packs. Teenagers try to impress their friends by talking back to the screen, whistling, and making what they consider to be hilarious noises. Adults act as if they were at home in their own living rooms and comment loudly on the ages of the stars or why movies aren't as good anymore. And people of all ages crinkle candy wrappers, stick gum on their seats, and drop popcorn tubs or cups of crushed ice and soda on the floor. They also cough and burp, squirm endlessly in their seats, file out for repeated trips to the rest rooms or concession stand, and elbow you out of the armrest on either side of your seat.</p>	<p>Third supporting paragraph</p>
<p>After arriving home from the movies one night, I decided that I was not going to be a moviegoer anymore. I was tired of the problems involved in getting to the movies and dealing with the theater itself and some of the patrons. The next day, I arranged to have cable TV service installed in my home. I may now see movies a bit later than other people, but I'll be more relaxed watching box office hits in the comfort of my own living room.</p>	<p>Concluding paragraph</p>

Here are examples of how the essay topics are posed.

Children should always have siblings; therefore children with siblings are better adjusted to getting along with others in relationships.

Explain the topic and either agree or disagree with the statement, offering support to the argument.

Alternative energy such as natural gas, wind energy or solar energy cost more than the value they give to society, therefore society should discontinue funding the alternative energy sources.

Explain the topic and either agree or disagree with the statement, offering support to the argument.