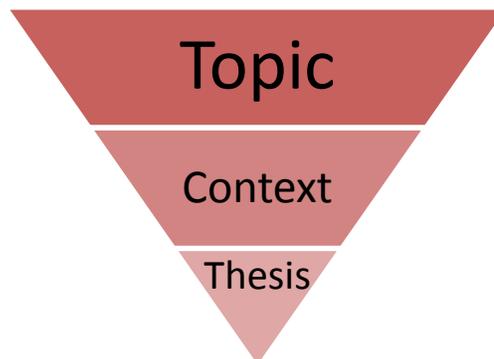


Essay Structure: The Basics

An essay usually follows a standard format. At some point, you have probably encountered the “burger” or “5 paragraph” technique for writing papers. Below is a modified version of this technique that better suits university academic writing.

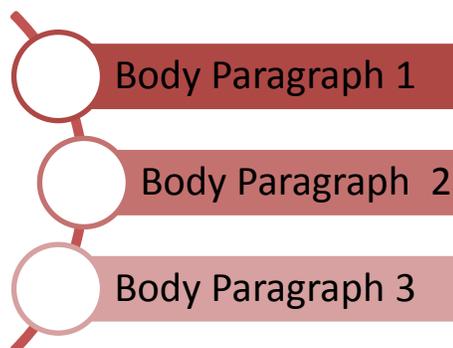
Introduction

The introduction provides context and outlines the central argument proven in your paper. In the first sentence, your main goal should be to address your topic. The middle of your introduction should create context. Finally, your last (or 2nd last) sentence should be your thesis statement.



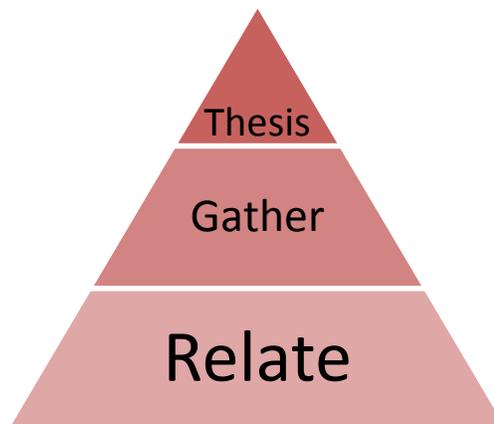
Body Paragraphs

You can often structure your body paragraphs around a strong thesis. Try to identify the main premises that would be necessary to proving your thesis and structure your body paragraphs around these central ideas. University essays often require more than three body paragraphs.



Conclusion

A conclusion does not just restate your thesis statement in different words. Gather the arguments you have made in your body paragraphs and explain their significance. Explain how the information you presented proves your thesis statement then relate why your topic matters; this could imply relating it to broader issues.



Structuring Your Body Paragraphs

Each body paragraph should be structured so that your argument is central to the paragraph. There are two common ways to structure a body paragraph: The Shaffer formula and the MEAL plan.

The Shaffer Formula		The MEAL plan	
TS	Topic Sentence	Main Idea	M
CD	Concrete Detail	Example	E
CM	Commentary	Analysis	A
CM	Commentary	Link to Thesis	L
Concluding Sentence			

We can use both of these formulas together to construct a body paragraph. Remember that every essay is different and there is no overarching formula that encompasses all topics/assignments.

Topic Sentence or Main Idea: The topic sentence of a paragraph documents the main content of your paragraph. It defines what you will prove.

Concrete Detail or Example: In this sentence, you may need to either reinforce your main idea or use a supporting example from a source, either paraphrase or quotation.

Commentary 1 or Analysis: Analyze your example, and explain why it is important for your argument. If you cannot explain why the supporting evidence is relevant or important, then it may need to be reconsidered.

Commentary 2 or Link to Topic Sentence: Link back to your topic sentence. You may also need to further deconstruct your supporting evidence.

Repeat: You may require additional supporting evidence. If you do, use the same structure as outlines above.

Concluding sentence: This sentence should synthesize the paragraph's argument or create a link back to your thesis statement.

You can modify this formula depending on essay requirements or different disciplines. In the Sciences, for example, it is usually better to include more concrete detail than analysis.