

Essay Paragraphs

ORGANIZATION WITHIN A PARAGRAPH

Topic Sentences – In most paragraphs, the first line is the topic sentence, although it may be located deeper within the body of the paragraph. Every paragraph has one main idea or topic. In an essay **this main idea must assist in proving the thesis statement**. If, in the body of your essay, you begin to summarize, rather than simply attempting to prove what you have stated in the thesis, you are on the wrong track. **Use the topic sentence as a statement of what you are proving in that paragraph.**

Evidence - Lawyers cannot simply argue cases on the basis of statements without proof, nor can you prove a thesis statement without specific evidence. Evidence comes in the form of specific events, quotes (either from the narrator or the characters), and symbols. With evidence, you don't have to rely on your opinions, you can use facts to prove that you are right about what you state in the **thesis statement**. Before you write your essay, you will need to gather evidence by selecting quotes, symbols, and events from the novel, story, poem, etc. that you are analyzing. You may have to do research or even skim through a novel again in order to pick out key evidence. Be sure you have a strong understanding of how your evidence proves your thesis. **Every paragraph must have specific evidence that proves the topic sentence.**

Analysis, Evaluation, Explanation -The reason you must understand how your evidence proves the thesis is because that is exactly what an essay does: it analyzes, evaluates, and explains events, characters, symbols, and quotes in novels in order to prove something. Because this is the most important task of an essay, it should also be the longest. Your analysis should be about twice as long as your evidence.

Concluding Sentence - Every paragraph should leave the reader with the feeling that you have proved a point. The concluding sentence of a paragraph does not conclude the essay, but it should make an important final observation about the topic you are proving in that paragraph.

All of these should exist in an essay paragraph. If you have more to say about the same topic, go ahead. You don't need to write a huge paragraph in order to fit in all of your evidence; simply begin a new paragraph when you move on to another part of the book or another idea which is related, but not exactly the same.

ORGANIZATION OF PARAGRAPHS

There are several ways to organize your ideas, but the key is that you are trying to prove one main point: the thesis statement. Since this is true, you will want one paragraph to lead to the next, and the next, in a logical, building order. To do this, consider how the first paragraph is related to the second and how the second is related to the third, and so on. Here are some possible methods of organizing paragraphs in an essay:

1. **by characters** – in order of importance or appearance in the novel
2. **by events** – chronologically or in order of importance
3. **by main arguments** – which order will have the strongest impact

Whichever method you choose, there must be some logical order to your essay. You cannot have random thoughts strewn throughout in a formal essay. Organization is of the utmost importance.