FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY OUTLINE

Writers who want their work to be clear and organized should follow consistent patterns in the way they structure their writing. The five-paragraph essay is a great place to develop and practice these patterns.

THE STRUCTURE OF INTRODUCTIONS

The Introduction — Accomplishes three main goals and moves from general to specific:

1. **Grabs the reader’s attention in an appropriate way** [i.e. a quotation, a brief illustration, an interesting fact]

2. **Establishes the direction of the paper:** Provides the context of the topic as it relates to the audience

3. **Gets to the point:** States the problem or key themes and concludes with the thesis statement*

THE STRUCTURE OF BODY PARAGRAPHS

1. **Topic sentence** — Begin with a sentence that introduces one of the points of your thesis statement.

2. **Assertion** — Transition to a specific point that supports the main idea of the paragraph.
   a. **Evidence** — Provide an example or cite research to support and explain your assertion.
   b. **Commentary** — Include several sentences that analyze your evidence and that clearly relate to the topic sentence. Repeat steps two through four up to three times within your paragraph.

3. **Concluding sentence** — End with a sentence that ties the paragraph’s topic directly back to the thesis statement.

*TIP: Academic paragraphs should range in length from 150-250 words. When gauging the length of your paragraphs, check your word count instead of relying on the number of sentences.

THE STRUCTURE OF CONCLUSIONS

The Conclusion – Reviews the **main points of the paper** and moves from **specific to general**:

1). **Restates the thesis statement**
   [the most specific sentence], not verbatim

2). **Summarizes the main idea of each paragraph**
   [about three sentences if writing a five-paragraph essay]

3). **Calls the reader to act**, respond, or conduct further research on the topic

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SAMPLE OUTLINE

Broad hook/opening
Context/themes
**THESIS**

**Paragraph 1**
- Topic Sentence (references thesis)
- **Assertion (claim)**
- **Evidence (logic/facts/research etc.)**
- **Commentary (connects evidence to claim)**
- Concluding Sentence

**Paragraph 2**
- Topic Sentence (references thesis)
- **Assertion (claim)**
- **Evidence (logic/facts/research etc.)**
- **Commentary (connects evidence to claim)**
- Concluding Sentence

**Paragraph 3**
- Topic Sentence (references thesis)
- **Assertion (claim)**
- **Evidence (logic/facts/research etc.)**
- **Commentary (connects evidence to claim)**
- Concluding Sentence

**Restate Thesis**
**Summarize main points**
**Call to action**