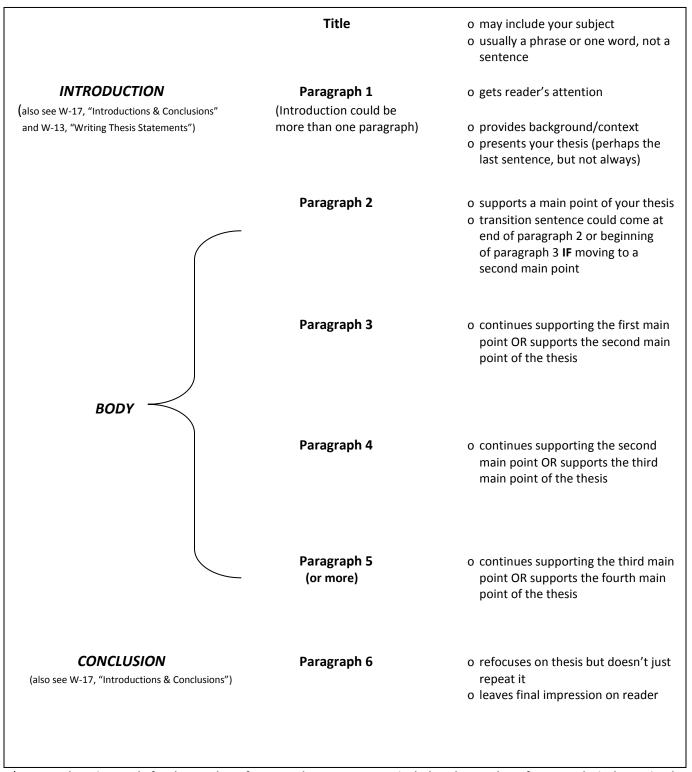
Basic Essay Structure & the Writing Process

The Writing & Learning Studio Room 4237 Shoreline Community College rev: 10-19-15

A Basic Essay Structure*



^{*} NOTE: There is no rule for the number of paragraphs an essay must include. The number of paragraphs is determined by the number of main points being made and the amount of support for each point.



Follow the Writing Process Steps

Writing is a *process*. It involves several interrelated activities that result in a finished piece of writing. These steps involve gathering and analyzing ideas and information, figuring out your main point, planning your writing, and then writing, revising, editing, and proofreading your paper. When you give yourself time to do all these activities, you will usually produce far better writing than if you try to finish a paper in one sitting.

In addition to giving yourself time to write a paper, your writing can also improve when you **share your thoughts, ideas, and writing with others**. Getting other peoples' perspectives can be useful during any of the writing steps—from gathering information and ideas; to formulating your main idea; to planning, revising, and editing your work.

So let's look more closely at each of the writing process steps.

- Do a brainstorm.
- Make a mind map.
- Freewrite.
- •Do any technique to generate as many ideas as possible related to your topic. Talk with others, too. They can help you get ideas.
- •Look over your list or mind map. Find details that are related to each other. How are they related? What are the **categories** of information?
- •What's the point you want to make about the details?

Prewrite

- Focus on writing about your main point (thesis statement). Don't worry yet about an introduction or conclusion!
- •Just develop the ideas that support your main point.
- •Think about how to organize your ideas. Which one should be first? Second? Sometimes making an outline can help.
- •How are you connecting your sentences and paragraphs? Do you use transition words that help the reader follow your ideas?
- •Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation yet!
- •This is a good time to get feedback on your writing.

Draft

- •Now is the time to look critically at the content, organization, and coherence of your paper.
- Does each paragraph have one main point that supports your thesis statement?
- •Have you developed each supporting detail sufficiently?
- Does each sentence in each paragraph support the paragraph's main point?
- •Now you can write an introduction and conclusion.
- •If you don't know the answers to these questions, ask for help.

Revise

- •When you're satisfied with your paper's content and organization, you can focus at the sentence level.
- •Check for correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You might also check for sentence style or sentence variety.
- Let some time go by before you proofread your work. When you're ready to proofread, print out a hard copy of your paper. Read your paper **slowly out loud**. If you know what kind of errors you usually make, check for those first.
- •If you don't know how to find errors in your writing, ask for help.

Edit/Proofread