

## Constructing Paragraphs by Sentence

Expressing your ideas about an artwork, a reading, or a question can be intimidating — especially if you are new to academic writing or to the rhetorical style expected in colleges across America. Many students worry about producing enough content (or length), or they are not sure how to explain their ideas clearly. Once you have all your ideas — and an outline to help you stay organized and focused — it may help to look at one paragraph at a time.

The following outlines break down the paragraphs of an analytical/argument essay sentence by sentence. They explain what each statement must **do**. You may need more than one sentence to fulfill some of these explanations or transitions, but these outlines show us what readers need in a structure that helps them understand. Use these templates as a guide for examining samples or your own work, or as prompts for your own composition.

### INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

5+ sentences giving context for your thesis:

1. “Hook” the reader by linking the subject of your thesis to something larger (background, a bigger idea, a quote, an anecdote, etc.).
2. Link the first idea to another element of your thesis OR continue to narrow your discussion of the first idea.
3. Link this idea/these ideas to the general field (Art, etc.).
4. May mention the work(s) or author & how it connects to the discussion in the first two sentences.
5. Offer a bit more specific context for the introduction of the thesis.
6. [Thesis Statement]

### THESIS STATEMENT

- Usually one sentence
- Narrow
- Arguable
- Points to Conclusion

Includes:

- Title & author/artist/etc.
- What’s being examined: formal elements, literary devices, characters, etc.
- What they do
- How or Why they do it \*most important

## **BODY PARAGRAPHS**

Each paragraph should focus on one or two observations, opinions, examples, or facts.

1. Topic Sentence: states the main idea of your paragraph, which will explain one part of your thesis
2. Introduction/context for your first observation (in H101, a specific example of a formal element)
3. First observation (or example, etc.)
4. Explanation of how that evidence supports your topic sentence (thereby supporting your thesis)
5. Introduction/context for your second observation (start with a transition showing how they are similar or distinct)
6. Second observation
7. Explanation of how that evidence supports your topic sentence
8. Summarize the discussion presented in this paragraph & briefly hint at (transition into) the next paragraph's discussion.

## **CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH**

Summarize your argument/ideas and relate what you've found to something outside the limits of the paper.

**1.**

Restate your thesis  
(use different words  
so it doesn't sound repetitive)

**2 – 4/5/6.** Restate your topic sentences  
(your main ideas – this might not be every paragraph,  
since some ideas may take more than one paragraph to explain)

**7.** Leave the reader with something to think about  
(a question, a comment on how this thesis changes the way we see \_\_\_\_\_, etc.).