

Academic Writing Guide: How to Write a Body Paragraph

What is a body paragraph?

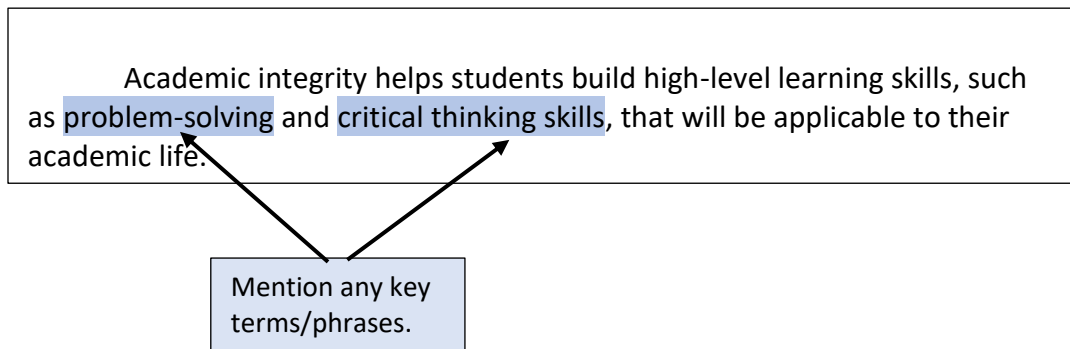
A body paragraph is a section in an essay that provides support for the thesis statement through the explanation of one specific idea. All body paragraphs have four main components to them:

- ⇒ **Topic Sentence/Claim**
- ⇒ **Evidence**
- ⇒ **Analysis**
- ⇒ **Closing/Connecting Sentence**

Topic Sentence/Claim

The first thing to appear in a body paragraph should be the topic sentence or main claim. **A topic sentence is a short and concise sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph is about. It also makes a claim that supports the thesis.** When trying to create a topic sentence, you should think about what the paragraph's main goal is and try to express one key idea at a time.

Example topic sentence



***Note:** If you are specifically discussing any authors and/or analyzing their work throughout your entire paragraph (i.e., **you are basing your argument on their source, not using their source to support your argument**), it is important that you mention their names in the topic

sentence as well. For example, if the entire paragraph is discussing the importance of Lavelle et al.'s research findings, then the topic sentence could start with: "Lavelle et al. assert that..."

Evidence

Evidence is anything that **supports** your claim. The evidence in an essay can be a:

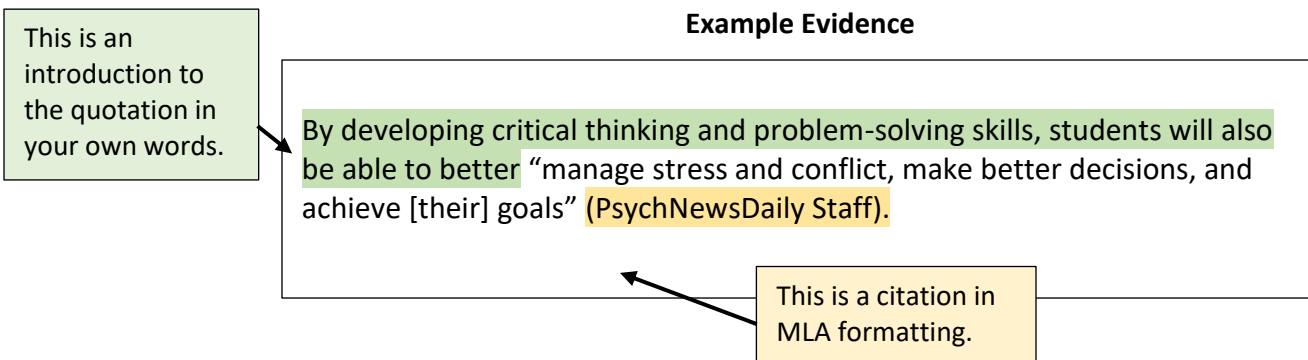
- ⇒ quote
- ⇒ paraphrase
- ⇒ statistic/data
- ⇒ summary

Depending on what kind of evidence you have, you may want to dedicate two or more sentences to this section of your paragraph.

If you are planning on having multiple pieces of evidence in one paragraph, make sure that you provide an analysis (see below) for each piece of evidence before you move on to the next.

Every piece of evidence from an outside source requires an in-text citation in the citation style needed for your assignment. (If you don't know what citation style to use, look at your assignment instructions and syllabus, or ask your instructor!)

If you want to know more about how to introduce evidence, please see the "Integrating Sources" document.



Analysis

The analysis is where all ideas are connected to one another. This is the most important part of a paragraph and has three main components. An analysis:

1. **Tells the reader what the evidence is saying (in your own words) to demonstrate its significance to your argument.** This is usually a simple statement that helps the reader understand what they just read. This should not be a restatement of the evidence (paraphrase) but a further explanation/elaboration so that your audience knows exactly what you are claiming. (Avoid having the assumption that your

audience will know precisely what you are referring to. Instead, show them what you are trying to prove.)

- 2. Explains how the chosen evidence helps support the topic sentence.** In a literary analysis, this is where you would focus on the tone, style, tense, language, meaning, or literary technique that is present. In a research paper, this is where you must explain to the reader how the data proves your claim.
- 3. Relates the evidence back to the thesis.** Now that the validity of the claim is proven with evidence, how does this then relate to the thesis? Make sure that you clearly explain the connection between the main point of your paragraph and your thesis. Doing so will help you strengthen your argument and help you avoid letting the evidence speak for you.

Example Analysis

In many cases, academic integrity is seen as the student’s responsibility to uphold, but in recent research, there has been a turn toward recognizing the influence of multiple participants in the academic community; specifically, “students, faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders within the learning institution each have different and complementary responsibilities” (Eaton et al. 43). Apart from promoting awareness of academic integrity and outlining clear rules for students, instructors also emphasize the importance of embodying these positive values—such as honesty and respect—when teaching (46). With this perspective in mind, it becomes clear that students can successfully develop their critical-thinking skills, enhance their learning, and become hardworking individuals in a collaborative environment that consists of supportive staff and faculty members.

This is an explanation of the evidence.

This is an explanation of how the evidence proves and supports the thesis statement.

This is the evidence that proves the main claim/topic sentence.

Closing/Connecting Sentence

The closing sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph that ties everything together. **The sentence, written in your own words, sums up the contents of the current paragraph and shows the reader how this idea is going to connect to the next.** Closing sentences do not include any detailed information, such as data, statistics, or quotations from other resources.

Example Closing Sentence

This is a finalizing statement that sums up what was just discussed in the paragraph.

Ultimately, as students continue to write essays throughout their academic career, they will be able to develop and refine their skills to use in all areas of life.

This is a brief mention of the main topic of the next paragraph.

The Complete Paragraph Outline

Topic Sentence: A short and concise sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph is about while also making a claim that supports your thesis. **Evidence:** An introduction of the evidence **and** then the quotation, paraphrase, statistic, or summary that relates to your topic, which is followed by an **in-text citation**. **Analysis:** An explanation of how the evidence proves the topic sentence and the thesis. **Closing Sentence:** A brief summary of the paragraph and a reference to the next one done in your own words.

This handout was put together with help from:

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