



Writing Guide: Body Paragraphs

1. Body, or support, paragraphs support the thesis, or main idea, of an essay.
2. Remember that a **thesis statement** is a one-sentence statement of the main idea of an essay and answers the question “What are you trying to prove?”
3. **Body paragraphs** support the thesis statement by answering the question “Why should we believe you?”
4. It’s helpful to think of body paragraphs as the meat of the essay. They contain most of the essay’s content.
5. Each body paragraph in an essay should develop one aspect of the thesis statement.
6. An effective body paragraph usually begins with a **topic sentence**, a one-sentence statement of the main idea of the paragraph.
7. The topic sentence is followed by support sentences that provide details, facts, examples, statistics, or anecdotes about the topic.
8. A well-developed body paragraph usually contains at least 6 sentences.
9. It’s a good idea to use a transition at the beginning of each body paragraph. A **transition** is a word or phrase that bridges ideas between paragraphs or between sentences. Here are some examples of transitions: *first, to begin with, in addition, another, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, in conclusion, furthermore, last but not least.*
10. The time-honored academic standard says that an essay should have 3 body paragraphs, but, really, any number is possible: 4, 7, 10 . . . whatever suits your purpose.

Introductory paragraph
Thesis

Body paragraph

Body paragraph

Body paragraph

Concluding paragraph