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## The 5 Paragraph Essay Format

### The First Paragraph:

- Begins with a topic sentence that introduces a general topic or theme.
- Follows the topic sentence with sentences that narrow the focus of the topic or theme, so that it is less general.
- Introduces the author of the text you are writing about (If applicable. If not, move on to the next bullet point).
- Introduces the title of that text (If applicable. If not, move on to the next bullet point).
- Narrows the discussion of the topic by identifying an issue or problem.
- Finishes with a thesis statement, which must be the final sentence of the introductory paragraph. Students will be graded on the quality of the thesis statement, and whether it is in its proper location—the final sentence of the introductory paragraph.

### Three Body Paragraphs:

- Begin with topic sentences that clearly relate to the topic, or issue, or problem, that was identified in the introductory paragraph.
- Sentences that elaborate on the focus laid out in the introductory paragraph, and demonstrate a clear connection to the thesis statement.
- A focus that consistently reflects the focus that was promised in the thesis statement, and an analysis that actually engages in comparison-contrast, or cause-effect, depending on what type of paper the student has been assigned to write.

### Conclusion Paragraph:

- Avoid phrases like "In conclusion, . . ."
- Begins with a topic sentence that clearly relates to the topic, or issue, or problem, that was identified in the introductory paragraph.
- Sentences that make connections with, or revisit, points from the introductory paragraph and the body paragraphs. These points now serve to close the paper's argument.
- A final comment, or intellectual conclusion of sorts that points out the larger significance of your argument.

### More About Thesis Statements:

The thesis statement must make clear to readers the focus of the paper, and what the paper seeks to accomplish. This semester, students will write different types of papers, such as comparison-contrast, cause-effect, and an argumentative paper. Each of these different types of papers will have different types of thesis statements.

- For example, a comparison-contrast paper might have a thesis that states: "The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast . . . ."
- A cause-effect paper might have a thesis that states: "The purpose of this paper is to examine . . . , the cause of which is . . . ," or "The purpose of this paper is to examine . . . the effect of which is . . . ."

An argumentative paper, however, is quite different because the definition of a thesis statement for an argumentative paper is as follows: A debatable claim. Here students must be careful to include a thesis statement that is indeed a debatable claim, as opposed to a statement of fact, and this is where students often experience difficulties that have a negative impact on the grades papers can receive.

Remember that the purpose of an argumentative paper is to persuade readers, so that by the end of the paper, readers agree with the paper's position on the issue at hand. Basically, to prove a statement of fact does not require much persuasion, but to prove a debatable claim requires much persuasion.

For example, if a student is assigned to write an argumentative paper about alternate-fuel technologies for cars, here are two example-thesis statements:

- Example of a poor thesis statement: "Biofuels and electric cars are two technologies that present strong possibilities for the future of transportation."
- Example of an acceptable thesis statement: "Biofuels and electric cars are two technologies that present strong possibilities for the future of transportation, but the choice that makes more sense is biofuels because battery technology is not sufficiently developed, the internal combustion engine would not have to be replaced, and the United States already has a fuel-delivery system available to the masses in the form of gasoline service stations."

Above, the example of a poor thesis is indeed poor because it is simply a statement of fact. It is entirely true that "Biofuels and electric cars are two technologies that present strong possibilities for the future of transportation," so a paper with this thesis statement sets out to prove a point that is pretty much of a given; however, a paper that uses the example of an acceptable thesis must prove to readers that biofuels are the better choice for the future. Moreover, the acceptable thesis statement even goes so far as to lay out for readers the three main points that the paper's body paragraphs will cover.

Always Use Academic Prose:

I will grade all your course work, in part, on how well you apply the following requirements to your writings:

- Do not use contractions.
- Do not use first-person pronouns such as "I" "me" "my."
- Do not use second-person pronouns such as "you" "your" "yours."
- Do not engage in personal stories, meaning stories of your own life experiences, or the experiences of friends, family, and so on.
- Do not begin sentences with conjunctions: but, and, or, nor, for, so, yet.
- Do not pose any questions in any assignments. This means, quite literally, not to use questions. Write sentences in the form of statements instead.
- Do not quote the bible or make allusions to religion in any way.
- Avoid any form of direct address to the reader, such as "think about the fact that . . ."
- Avoid too casual of a prose style, such as sentences that begin with words like "well, sure, now, yes, no."
- Do not use phrases such as, "a lot," "lots" or "lots of," which can usually be replaced with one of the following words: many, most, much, often.
- Do not use exclamation points, for they are almost always unnecessary.
- Periods and commas should be inside of quotation marks, but other forms of punctuation go outside of quotation marks.
- Do not use the word "okay" when words like "acceptable" could be used instead.
- Do not use the word "nowdays," "nowadays," or any slight variation thereof.