

# Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs should all work to support your thesis by explaining *why* or *how* your thesis is true. Every sentence in your body paragraphs should work toward supporting your thesis statement. Each body paragraph has three types of sentences.

## Topic sentences

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A topic sentence states the main idea, or focus, of the paragraph. The rest of the body paragraph will give evidence and explanations that show *why* or *how* your topic sentence is true. In many ways, a topic sentence is very similar to a thesis. The biggest differences will be the location of the sentence and the scope of the ideas.

### An effective topic sentence—

- clearly **supports** the thesis statement.
- is usually at the **beginning** of a body paragraph.
- controls the content of **all** of the supporting sentences in its paragraph.
- is a **complete** sentence.
- does **not announce** the topic (e.g., "I'm going to talk about exercise.").
- should **not** be **too general** (e.g., "Exercise is good.").
- should **not** be **too specific** (e.g., "Exercise decreases the chance of developing diabetes, heart disease, asthma, osteoporosis, depression, and anxiety.").

## Supporting sentences

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Your body paragraph needs to explain *why* or *how* your topic sentence is true. The sentences that support your topic sentence are called **supporting sentences**. You can have many types of supporting sentences. Supporting sentences can give examples, explanations, details, descriptions, facts, reasons, etc.

## Concluding sentences

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Your final statement should conclude your paragraph logically. Conclusion sentences can restate the main idea of your paragraph, state an opinion, make a prediction, give advice, etc. New ideas should not be presented in your concluding sentence.

## Characteristics of Effective Body Paragraphs

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All sentences in your body paragraph need to work together *within the paragraph*, and all the paragraphs need to work together *within the essay*. As you draft and revise your paragraphs, you will need to write the sentences and paragraphs to be 1) unified, 2) developed, and 3) cohesive. If the sentences and paragraphs have [unity](#), [development](#), and [cohesion](#), they will more likely work better together in the essay to express your main idea.

## Exercises

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### Exercise 2.5: Body Paragraph Analysis

Read this example body paragraph and answer the following questions:

- *Is the topic sentence effective?*
- *Do the supporting sentences directly connect to the topic sentence? Or are there unnecessary or overly specific details included?*
- *Does the concluding sentence effectively end the point?*
- *Is the paragraph logically organized?*

In addition, cooperation between several people can create something better. When people are able to take the first step, listen, and understand, cooperation will be much easier. Every time that people are assigned to a group project, it is a challenge for everyone because there is always a person who does not want to cooperate or a person who wants to do all the work themselves, and it is very complicated to get everyone to agree. Examples like these show that we have a wrong preconceived idea. "If you plant two plants close together, the roots commingle and improve the quality of the soil that both plants will grow better than if they were separated. If you put two pieces of wood together, they will hold much more than the total of the weight held by each separately." (Covey, 1989, p.275). People can see this principle in nature and in their daily lives; the set of several pieces that form a comfortable sofa where they watch television, the set of various colors and shapes that form a picture, or things as simple as a toothbrush that are made up of different materials that when brought together make their lives easier. Changing the way of thinking is essential for the use of this principle.

Covey, Stephen R. (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.





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