

How to Write a Five-Paragraph Essay From Grace Fleming

For Class Assignments or Tests

As you've probably noticed, essays assignments can pop up in any class.

An essay is a literary composition that expresses a certain idea, claim, or concept and backs it up with supporting statements. It will follow a logical pattern, to include an introductory paragraph (make the claim), a body (support), and a conclusion (summary of statements and support).

English and Literature teachers use them on a regular basis, but essays are also a test tool used commonly in the social sciences, and even in math and science class.

Of course, essays play a big role in the college application process, as well. In short, there's just no avoiding essays, as long as you're in school!

Luckily, you can learn to craft a great essay if you can follow the standard pattern and write in a clear and organized manner.

Introduction

The introduction is the first paragraph in your essay, and it should accomplish a few specific goals.

1. Capture the reader's interest

It's a good idea to start your essay with a really interesting statement, in order to pique the reader's interest.

Avoid starting out with a boring line like

"In this essay I will explain why Rosa Parks was an important figure."

Instead, try something like

"A Michigan museum recently paid \$492,000 for an old, dilapidated bus from Montgomery, Alabama."

The second sentence sounds much more interesting, doesn't it? It would encourage most people to keep on reading.

2. Introduce the topic

The next few sentences should explain your first statement, and prepare the reader for your thesis statement.

"The old yellow bus was reported to be the very one that sparked the civil rights movement, when a young woman named Rosa Parks..."

3. Make a claim or express your opinion in a thesis sentence.

Your thesis sentence should provide your specific assertion and convey clearly your point of view.

"In refusing to surrender her seat to a white man, Rosa Parks inspired a courageous freedom movement that lives on, even today."

Body

The body of the essay will include three paragraphs, each limited to one main idea that supports your thesis. You should state your idea, then back it up with two or three sentences of evidence or examples.

Example of a main idea:

"It took incredible courage for an African American woman to make such a bold stance in 1955 Alabama."

Offer evidence to support this statement:

"This act took place in an era when African Americans could be arrested and face severe retribution for committing the most trivial acts of defiance."

Include a few more supporting statements with further evidence, then use transition words to lead to the following paragraph.

Sample transition words:

moreover

in fact

on the whole

furthermore

as a result

simply put

for this reason

similarly
likewise
it follows that
naturally
by comparison
surely
yet

The fifth paragraph will be your conclusion.

Conclusion

The final paragraph will summarize your main points and re-assert your main claim. It should point out your main points, but should not repeat specific examples.

Once you complete the first draft of your essay, it's a good idea to re-visit the thesis statement in your first paragraph. Read your essay to see if it flows well.

You might find that the supporting paragraphs are strong, but they don't address the exact focus of your thesis. Simply re-write your thesis sentence to fit your body and summary more exactly.

By doing this, you will ensure that every sentence in your essay supports, proves, or reflects your thesis.