

Academic Essay Format

Many students are familiar with the “five-paragraph essay” format, but the number of paragraphs is not as important as using the organizational pattern of a multi-paragraph academic essay to meet the following requirements:

- Answer the question! Address the prompt and the text it is based on. Your thesis statement (primary claim) should include a clearly stated answer.
- Explain your logic/reasoning: How did you arrive at your answer to the question? Why are your claims and conclusions legitimate? You have to make a clear and convincing argument or support a conclusion of your own. Explain the reasoning that led you to the conclusion.
- Do not just retell the story or summarize information that was in the text.

I. Introduction

- a. Attention Getter/Hook
- b. Background Information
- c. Thesis/Primary Claim

II. Body

a. Claim #1

- i. Textual Evidence A that supports/illustrates the claim
- ii. Reasoning A that explains how the evidence supports the claim
- iii. Textual Evidence B that further supports/illustrates claim
- iv. Reasoning B that explains how the evidence supports the claim

*Depending on the sources and the assignment, there may be more than two pieces of textual evidence to support a claim, but two is a minimum. If you can't find at least two pieces of evidence to support a claim, it isn't a very strong claim.

b. Claim #2

- i. Textual Evidence A that supports/illustrates the claim
- ii. Reasoning A that explains how the evidence supports the claim
- iii. Textual Evidence B that further supports/illustrates claim
- iv. Reasoning B that explains how the evidence supports the claim

*See above.

c. Claim #3

- i. Textual Evidence A that supports/illustrates the claim
- ii. Reasoning A that explains how the evidence supports the claim
- iii. Textual Evidence B that further supports/illustrates claim
- iv. Reasoning B that explains how the evidence supports the claim

*See above.

Note: Depending on the assignment and the amount of time allotted, there may be more than three claims that support the thesis. The more ways you can support a thesis and rebut counterclaims, the more convincing your essay will be.

- d. **Counterclaims/Rebuttals:** Acknowledge potential counterclaims and offer logical rebuttals. Use evidence and explain reasoning in support of rebuttals.

Note: Sometimes it is more natural to address counterclaims one at a time in the body paragraphs where a particular claim is discussed, in which case, this section of the essay would be unnecessary and the above sections would be somewhat larger to accommodate the counterclaims and rebuttals.

III. Conclusion

- a. Restates thesis in different words
- b. Summarizes claims/main points
- c. Clincher: Powerful closing statement