

Communication of ideas is a fundamental aspect of being human. Depending upon the mode of communication used, techniques and strategies to effectively communicate differ. An author writes to make a permanent record of ideas to convey to a reader. A formal essay is the tool to communicate these ideas in a structured manner that consists of an introductory paragraph with a thesis sentence, multiple body paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph.

An introductory paragraph gives context for what is going to follow. It often starts with a general idea or anecdote. Each sentence that follows narrows the reader's focus to the thesis sentence. The thesis sentence prepares the reader to anticipate the core information contained in the essay. It often simply enumerates the ideas of each body paragraph to follow. A practical thesis sentence means the reader can link information found in each body paragraph with potential content from upcoming paragraphs rather than being surprised and interrupted when unexpected content is found.

A body paragraph is where new information is found. It starts with a topic sentence that establishes a boundary for the content of that paragraph. If the information in the body paragraph doesn't match the topic sentence, either the topic sentence needs updating or the extra information needs to be in a different paragraph. The primary support sentence is next. It provides the central point supporting the topic sentence. The secondary support is next. It clarifies or exemplifies the content in the primary supportive sentence. One or more pairs of primary and secondary support sentences come next followed finally by a conclusion or transition sentence.

The roles of the sentences in the body paragraph provide the structure that facilitates efficient communication to the reader. The primary support and secondary support sentence pair is the limited location for the author to make one point. That point is often lost when a primary support sentence is without its secondary support sentence. The reader expects primary and secondary sentences only. Writing additional sentences giving tertiary and quaternary support instead demonstrate rambling. Once the roles of the body paragraph sentences are understood, when the author stays within the expected structure, the reader doesn't detect the structure but instead understands the ideas presented.

The conclusion paragraph is a review of the essay's main points and ties its ideas together into a cohesive unit. Sequentially reiterating the conclusions of each body paragraph into a single paragraph is a compelling technique to form a strong conclusion. When the concluding sentences of each body paragraph are copied and reworded one after the other, the last paragraph almost writes itself. If the conclusion paragraph isn't quite right, swapping the introductory paragraph with the conclusion paragraph is a surprising technique that may improve your essay. Since the author knows the conclusion when writing the introduction, any conclusive sentences unsupported in an introductory paragraph are well supported in a conclusion paragraph. Once the reader completes the conclusion paragraph, the reader understands the author's message.

An essay boils down to ideas you're going to read, ideas you're reading, and ideas you've just read. The introductory paragraph and thesis sentence set the stage. The body paragraphs deliver the content. The conclusion paragraph finalizes the communication. When computer scientists know how to apply their precision skills in language syntax and semantics to the expected structure of a formal essay and know the roles of each sentence in each paragraph, wow, they've got all the workings of great communicators!

Legend:

Thesis sentence

Topic sentence

Primary support sentence

Secondary support sentence

Conclusion / Transition sentence