

Paragraphs- analytical essays

Most of the papers you write in college are analytical essays. An *analytical essay* is one that analyzes a text. A **text** can be an essay, a poem, a story, a movie, an idea, a belief, a symbol, a relationship, a physical object, etc. When you analyze something, you either take a text apart to see how it works (*analysis*), compare/contrast two or more texts to get to a new idea (*synthesis*), or judge the text based on clear criteria (*evaluation*). In other words, when you analyze a text you provide some insight or opinion about it. This is what is known as a **thesis**. Every analytical paper requires a thesis. In school, a thesis will be a response to a prompt given to you by your instructor. Here is a simple equation to help you remember the parts of a thesis:

$$\text{thesis} = \text{text} + \text{opinion/insight}$$

The text is what you are writing about in your essay (what you are analyzing) and the opinion/insight is what you are trying to show about that text (the analysis). A thesis requires both parts of the equation. When you clearly state your thesis in your essay, this is known as a **thesis statement**.

An analytical essay then attempts to demonstrate or prove the thesis statement through a series of examples and logical reasoning. This is known as the **argument**. The argument gets developed through the paragraphs of the essay.

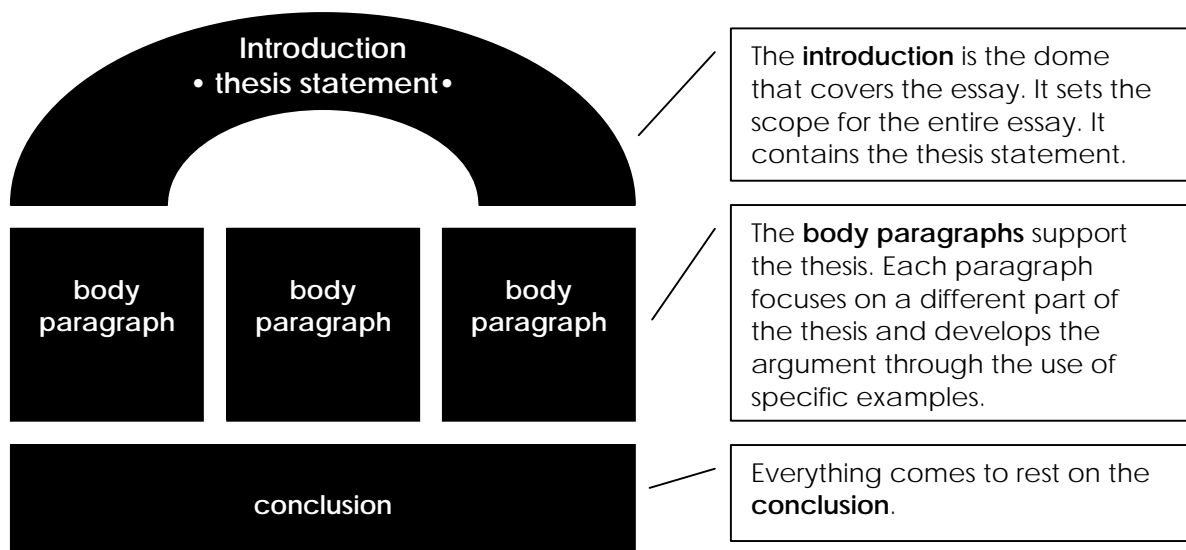
Paragraph types

There are three basic paragraph types in an analytical essay: the introduction, the body paragraphs, and the conclusion.

Introduction. This is the first paragraph (or paragraphs, in longer essays) of an essay. As the name implies, it introduces the topic of the essay. It draws the reader in and makes the reader curious about the rest of the essay. The main goal of the introduction is to state the thesis.

Body paragraphs. The body paragraphs are where you prove or demonstrate the thesis of your essay by providing examples, explaining processes, providing arguments, etc. Each body paragraph has its own topic and example(s). The topic of each body paragraph focuses on a certain aspect of the thesis.

Conclusion. This is the final paragraph (or paragraphs) of an essay. This is where the writer ties all the parts of the essay together and leaves the reader with some final thoughts. The conclusion does not introduce new information; it provides an ending to all the information that came before.



Body Paragraph Development

Each body paragraph should develop one clear topic that helps to further the thesis. In order to make sure your body paragraphs are developed effectively, there are three key elements to keep in mind. These three elements can be summed up in the helpful acronym **P.I.E.**: **p**oint, **i**llustration, and **e**xplanation.

Point. Every body paragraph makes one clear point. The point is a topic and an insight about that topic. The point is often named in the **topic sentence** at the beginning of the paragraph.

Illustration. Every point needs to be backed up with concrete evidence. You can provide a personal example, discuss information that you have read, offer a statistic, quote an expert, etc.

Explanation. The explanation makes the connections clear. It explains how the illustration proves the point, and tells how the point relates to the thesis of the entire essay.

Paragraphs vary. Sometimes a point can be stated in a single sentence. Sometimes it may take several. Some paragraphs focus on one illustration in depth; others offer a few illustrations to demonstrate the point. Furthermore, these three elements do not always have to appear in the same sequence. In fact, it's good to change the order now and again to keep your writing from seeming too mechanical. Also keep in mind that the PIE structure is just a helpful rule of thumb. There is no formula for good writing.

Sample paragraphs

Read the following paragraphs and answer the questions at the bottom.

A. I have an experience that's a good example. My sister really loved girly toys. She played with them all the time and would throw tantrums in the toy store if my parents didn't buy her new ones. I thought her toys were gross. I preferred my Tonka trucks and G.I. Joe figures. Sometimes I'd take her Barbie and hide it from her. That really made her mad. Now my sister is twenty-four and I just don't understand her at all.

B. Watching my sister grow up, I've seen how toys influence children to adopt stereotypical gender roles in adulthood. When my sister was a girl, she always wanted to play with toy cookware. She saw these toys displayed on commercials. Girls in pink dresses were shown smiling, pretending to cook meals for their proud parents. I gagged when I saw these commercials, because they seemed so clichéd, but my sister thought that it would be fun to play with these toys. So she begged our parents for an Easy Bake Oven. When she finally got one, she pretended to cook elaborate meals for her stuffed animals. This went on for years. Now that my sister is grown, she is expected to do most of the cooking in her household, and she accepts this. It's obvious to me now that the toys she played with as a child trained her to be the stereotypical housewife that she is today.

1. Can you locate where the point is stated in each paragraph? If so, underline it.
2. Is the writer's experience clearer in one paragraph than the other? Why?
3. In which paragraph is the connection between the experience described and the point being made the clearest? Underline the sentence or sentences that make the connection clear.